



# MACBETH

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## FOREWORD

It is sixteen years now since I retired, after thirty-one years of work in teaching at the Presidency College. The memory of that work, and of the happiness I felt in performing it, has never left me. In imagination often, and in dreams sometimes, it has come back to me. But this is no more than the shadow of a past happiness. The affection of two of my old pupils is replacing this shadow by the substance; and as I once lectured on Shakespeare in the Class-Room, their affection enables me now to lecture again on Shakespeare through the Press.

*July, 1928  
London*

H. M. Percival



## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	...	...	...	...	<b>vii</b>
<b>MACBETH</b>	...	...	...	...	<b>1</b>
<b>NOTES</b>	...	...	...	...	<b>87</b>



## INTRODUCTION

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### I

#### Date of the Play

This play was first published in 1623, in the First Folio of the collected plays. No quarto of the separate play is known to exist. No record of its date of composition exists ; but limits of time can be fixed as being between 1603 and 1610, on the following grounds : In IV. i. 121, "twofold balls and treble sceptres" point to 1603, when the union of the crowns of England and Scotland took place. In II. iii. 4-8, the reference probably is to the trial of the Jesuit Garnet, and to the low prices of wheat—both in 1606. An entry in the Diary of a Dr. Forman mentions the performance of a play, *Macbeth*, in 1610. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, first staged in 1611, there is a reference to the ghost of Banquo. The two last dates are taken as referring to a revival of the play, and the two earlier ones, to first or earlier performances.

### II

#### Sources of the Incidents

The idea of writing the play is thought to have been suggested by King James I.'s *Demonology*, written in 1599, to denounce witchcraft. Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*, written in 1584, was drawn upon by Shakespeare in the witch-scenes. A Latin interlude, *Tres Sibyllæ*, played before James I. at Oxford in 1605 might have suggested to him a play with a witch-element in it. This element he found ready to his hand in the source from which he drew.



## MACEETH

This Source was Holinshed's *Chronicle*, published in 1578. The portion of this chronicle dealing with Scotland, which Holinshed translated from the Latin of Boece's *Historiæ Scotorum*, supplies most of the materials; the portion of it dealing with England (the main work) supplies the incidents about young Siward. The incidents in the plot of the play relating to King Duncan are compounded of incidents in the chronicle relating to two different kings—King Duff (961-967), who was murdered by Donwald, lieutenant of Forres Castle, at the instigation of his wife; and King Duncan (1034-1040), who was killed by one of his generals, Macbeth, who then usurped the throne. The details of the murder of Duncan in the play and of the prodigies that follow it are taken from the Duff story—with alterations: thus, though there are witches in it, they are not those of the play. The details of the rest of the plot are taken from the Duncan story in the chronicle; they are mostly historical, but this story supplies the witches as they are in the play. Wherever these two prosaic narratives fit his artistic purpose, Shakespeare adheres closely to them; where they do not, his imagination drops them, to take its flights into the regions of pure creation, and it brings into being actions and characters that none else could create. These adherences to and departures from his sources are in outline as follows:—

In the Duff story the witches practise their art, but it is to kill the king by a wasting disease; they are found out and burnt to death. The lieutenant of Forres Castle has a grievance against the king, and is instigated by his wife to kill him; he is killed by four chamberlains bribed by the lieutenant; prodigies follow the murder—darkness for six months, night and day, all over the realm, fearful ragings of the elements, unnatural horrors, like those described in the play.

In the Duncan story, Banquo, thane of Lochaber, is despoiled by rebels, appeals in vain for help to the king, who is "too soft and gentle of nature, and negligent in punishing offenders," is driven out of Lochaber by the rebel leader, Macdonwald, whose forces consist of "kerns and gallow-glasses" drawn from the Western Isles. Macbeth, thane of Glamis, who "if he had not been somewhat cruel of nature, might have been thought most worthy of the government," helps Banquo to suppress the rebellion, after killing Macdonwald. Soon after comes news that Sweno, king of Norway, has landed in Fife at



## INTRODUCTION

ix

the head of a Danish army of invasion. The Scottish army, led by the king in person, with Macbeth and Banquo in command under him, advances to meet the invaders, and meets with a reverse; to retrieve the reverse, the king sends a gift of meat and drink, poisoned with deadly nightshade, to the enemy, who are short of provisions. Macbeth attacks them while in stupor from the narcotic, kills many and compels Sweno to fly back to Norway. Canute, king of England, sends a second army of Danes to avenge the defeat of his brother, Sweno; it is defeated by Macbeth, and a treaty of peace is concluded. All this takes place in the "seventh year" of Duncan's reign, and brings us to Act III, Scene iii. Here agreements and differences between chronicle and play become matters of numerous details. After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth "usurps" the throne (or is "elected" to it by a packed electoral college of Thanes, whom he had previously won over to his cause, but who are never mentioned in the play—that he might be made to stand alone and conspicuous in his wickedness); reigns seventeen years, and is killed, after a long and lonely flight and pursuit after defeat in battle (but not that of Dunsinane) by Macduff, in 1057, "the sixteenth year of Edward the Confessor's rule in England." "In the beginning of his reign he accomplished many worthy acts, right profitable to the commonwealth, but afterwards, by illusion of the devil, he defamed the same with most terrible cruelty." Dates in the above are a little differently given in different parts of Holinshed.

Both in outline and in details *creation and development of character* is the guiding consideration that makes Shakespeare follow, or depart from, the chronicle. In the indolent good nature, the incompetence, the cowardly criminality of Duncan; in the bravery, the fitness for rule, the long beneficent reign, and the blot of cruelty on all these virtues, of Macbeth; in the vulgar-minded ambition of his wife (Gruoch or Grwok is her name) "to be queen," and her criminal instigation of her husband; in the suppliant attitude of Banquo towards the old king; in his support and countenance of the future new king to commit his great crime, from ignoble motives of personal advancement at his hands;—in all these in the chronicle we see both likeness and unlikeness to the Duncan, the Macbeth, the Lady Macbeth, the Banquo, of Shakespeare's creation. In bare facts, and not always even in



## MACBETH

them, lies the likeness; in dramatic situations that work out character, lies the unlikeness. Such situations are the Dagger Scene, the Ghost Scene, the Mother-and-little-son Scene, the Malcolm-Macduff-testing Scene, the Sleep-walking Scene, the Banquo's-issue Scene.

Why does Shakespeare take these personages from history (as Holinshed wrote it), and then give them characters that they have not in history? He does so, because he is an artist, not a historian: from history he takes *individuals*, and by his art he creates *types* out of them. In history, Duncan, Macbeth, Banquo are men of mixed good and evil in them, such as we always find men to be in actual life. By Shakespeare's art they are made types of the good man, the wicked man, the upright man; the good or bad luck of such men as we read of in history, touches us but little, but passingly. For the deaths of the good man and the upright man, such as we read of in the play, at the hands of the wicked man, we feel deeply. It is for that strange pleasure of feeling deep pain in the fates of imaginary persons that we read a tragedy; it is to know facts about real persons that we read history. Who cares much when he reads in Holinshed that Macbeth had killed Duncan and Banquo, after he knows that the murdered men had much evil in them, and their murderer much good in him? But who, when he reads in Shakespeare's play of the very same two deeds, does not (metaphorically) "drown the wind with tears" and cry upon "blood to have blood?" Who cares two straws about what became of Gruoch? But who does not breathe a deep-drawn sigh for Lady Macbeth's end?

Let it be added that even historians do not agree as to facts. In the Duff story, the wife of the rebel thane urged her husband to murder the king, in revenge for his refusal to redress a wanton wrong done to him by the king. In the Duncan story, Macbeth's wife urged him to the same crime, because she "was very ambitious, and burned in unquenchable desire to bear the name of queen," and for no other reason whatever. Modern historical research has brought out the fact that Duncan's grandfather had dethroned and murdered Lady Macbeth's grandfather; that her brother had burned to death her first husband in his castle; that she fled for refuge, with her infant son, to Macbeth, then thane of Ross; that Macbeth sheltered her, and afterwards married her. We hear no more after this of this deeply-wronged

## INTRODUCTION

xi

woman; and the Lady Macbeth of the play, after Duncan's murder, is wholly a creation of Shakespeare's, in action, in suffering, in death.

In no less different a light does Macbeth stand in history, other than Holinshed's biased one. Succession to the Scottish throne had for long been regulated by the customary law of Tanistry by which succession was limited to the family, that member of it who was judged to be the fittest to rule being elected by the thanes as successor; usually this was a brother, and this brother's successor was a son of the last king. Under this law, through whose working the Scottish nation and the Scottish chroniclers loved to trace back the unbroken line of their kings, in this zig-zag way, to Æneas of Troy, and before him, to carry the line safe across the Flood in Noah's ark, straight up to Adam and Eve (as does Fordun, the chronicler), Malcolm II (1005-1034) came to the throne, and broke this venerable line by murdering three of his kinsmen who should have been his lawful successors, in order to secure the unlawful succession of his grandson Duncan, who cuts such a pitiful figure in Holinshed. Duncan's incapacity gave Macbeth, the next lawful successor in tanistry, the double justification to attack and slay him in battle and to reign, a beneficent king, for seventeen years. During this period, it is said, he promulgated a code of laws, and, in conjunction with his wife, endowed the national Celtic church, i.e., the monasteries of the anchorite Culdees. Siward, Earl of Northumbria, took up the cause of Duncan's son, Malcolm, his grandson (Duncan's wife being Siward's daughter); attacked Macbeth in 1054, and was repulsed; with Malcolm, now grown up, attacked him again, was successful, and slew Macbeth at the battle of Lumphanan, in Aberdeenshire, in 1057. Malcolm Canmore (Big-head) then reigned till 1093. Placed on the throne with English aid, he cemented this alliance by marrying an English princess, Margaret, daughter of Edward the Confessor. Thus was established a double bond by marriages between the houses of English Kings and earls and the house of the Scottish usurping king, Duncan. Thus did his son naturally incline to the English people and English institutions, and proceed to Anglicise the Scots (e.g., he changed the thanes into earls), and thus did English historians next proceed to pervert Scottish history by debasing the older Celtic line of kings, and exalting the new Anglo-Normanized line. They made out Macbeth, the last king



of the former line, to be the usurper, and blackened his character, and made out Duncan, the ancestor of the latter, to be lawful king. Scottish chroniclers before Holinshed, such as Boece and Wyntoun, had, however, begun to take this Anglo-Normanizing bias, and Holinshed only followed them. Shakespeare followed Holinshed, and drew upon his perverted facts. The result was the tragedy of *Macbeth*, the plot of which was built on these "facts," but the characters in which were wholly the creation of his divinely gifted genius.

### III

#### Action of the Play

Here are given a general summary by acts and an analysis by scenes. In the Notes will be given interpretations of particular passages in the scenes. The first two, given here, will trace the main line of the Action. The third not being needed here for the continuity of this line, may best be placed close to the passages concerned. What is here given is an outline, what in the Notes fills in the body.

**ACT I.** The First Crime, after much Irresolution, is Resolved upon at last.

**ACT II.** The First Crime is Committed.

**ACT III.** The Second Crime is Resolved upon after Deliberation, but without Hesitation, and is Committed without Delay.

**ACT IV.** The Third Crime is Resolved upon on the Instant, is Committed, and is followed by Wholesale Murders (all the other three were murders too) all over Scotland.

**ACT V.** The Punishment of this Murderous Criminals, after a last Glut of Murders on the field of battle.

**ACT I.** The prophecies of the powers of Evil, lying even when telling the truth, allure the ambition of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth alike; he is irresolute, she resolved to gratify it at the cost of the life of an innocent old man, blameless in character, beloved by his subjects, bestowing honours on him as the first of his subjects; he



## INTRODUCTION

xiii

hesitates, but her imperious will overcomes his hesitation to commit such a crime against such a man, and Macbeth the Irresolute becomes Macbeth the Resolved.

ACT II. The crime that originated with him, and was hastened by her, is committed by him; he is suspected at once, but the suspicion does not prevent him from attaining his object, the crown of Scotland. Remorse is alive in his breast, but no Repentance follows.

ACT III. Banquo, whom also one of the prophecies concerned, unlike Macbeth, resists the lure of the powers of Evil, and prays to the Supreme Power of Good to deliver him from the temptation. This superiority, this kingship by nature, which makes Macbeth, king by title, feel his inferiority, feel that Banquo is real king over him, and that prophecy about kingship in store for Banquo's issue—these two causes resolve Macbeth to remove them from his way. He succeeds in removing Banquo, but fails to remove his son, who lives to continue the line of Banquo. His second crime committed, Remorse that followed the first crime, dies, and with this second murder, he also murders all Moral Sense within his own breast.

ACT IV. Macbeth—before his first crime, a victorious general, admired by all classes in the kingdom, honoured by his king—after these two crimes, has changed into a tyrant, feared and hated by all, and maintaining himself in power through cruelty and oppression towards all. Thane and churl, great and small, all alike have been made to pay with their lives for his mere suspicion of them, and this fills all Scotland with the wail of widows and orphans made by him. His suspicion next lights upon Macduff, now the first thane of Scotland, after Banquo's death. He consults his false prophets; they first tell him to fear Macduff—a truth; and then they tell him not to fear him—a lie; he believes the truth, and does not see through the lie, but resolves to make doubly sure by murdering him; his murderous arm failing to reach him, he makes it fall upon his innocent wife and children; but Macduff lives to make Macbeth's fear come true, as Fleance lives to falsify his hope. Three great crimes have now been committed: the first has placed him on the throne, but taken away all peace and happiness from his life on it; the second has felt him that throne only for the term of that unhappy life, no son of his succeeding to alleviate that misery with the hope that his issue would



sit on his throne, and be happy on it; the third has left alive an avenger destined to crush even his last hope that at least he would die in his bed in peace. This third great crime is the action of a Human Wild Beast devoid of all human feeling of pity and mercy, of all human sense of right and wrong. After the first, he feared consequences; after the second, he damned consequences; and now after the third, he has no idea of consequences, any more than a wild beast or a mad man has.

ACT V. The prophecies, once seeming truths fulfilled, now turn out to be lies, baited to lure him to destruction, body and soul. His wife had added her evil human inspiration to this unholy allurement of supernatural power, and she now pays for her share in his first crime (she had none in the others) with a violent death, after a life of ever-growing remorse for a crime by which nothing has been gained, and all has been lost. He himself still clings to life though he knows he has lost his soul; he still sticks to the throne (seated on which he had looked for happiness), though he now finds it to be a rack of torture. He still clutches close the last of the prophecies, though he has found the others to be straws, and is disillusioned even of the last straw—a miserable criminal, with all his criminality exposed to his own eyes as well as to the eyes of all others; and we see him, during the last hour of his life, engaged in the work that has long become a habit with him—a wanton destruction of human life. The action closes with the slaying of this Wild Beast or this Raving Madman. The powers of evil had done much, but the Supreme Power of Good permitted them to do no more; they were not allowed to prevent the throne of Scotland from being restored to its rightful occupant, nor after him to prevent Banquo's issue from succeeding to it..

## I, i.

The scene opens *after* the witches have performed an incantation here, and *while* a battle is still going on elsewhere. This incantation has enabled them to *know* the present—that there is a battle going on, or to *bring about* the present—this very battle and its imminent result; and to know the future—that Macbeth, victorious, will be raised to a new thanedom at once, and will be king hereafter, and that after him

## INTRODUCTION

xv

Banquo's issue will be kings. This knowledge of the future the witches mean to impart to the two victorious generals, and they go forth to meet them. It will be asked how the witches could *bring about* the battle and shape its result. We are in the regions of the supernatural, and therefore may well believe that they had this power not merely *to know* but *to shape* the future—but to shape it only for malevolent ends, bestowing success only in order to work ruin. Is there, then, no limit to the range of this power, that thus seems to compel even the free-will of man to cease to be free, and his will to act only in bondage to their malevolent ends? Schiller, in his free rendering of this play, adds lines of his own here (which he makes his witches utter) that give the answer:—"The mind of man is free to reject or choose sin and crime. When man is happy we hate him; when he loses control over his passions, he gets within our power; we sow in his breast the seed of evil, but with him it lies to eat the fruit." The witches sow their seed in the breast of Macbeth, where it finds a soil prepared by his own innate nature, prone to evil, to make it fructify, and he tastes the bitter fruit; they sow the same seed in the breast of Banquo, but there it dies in an incongenial soil. This is the limit set by the Supreme Power of Good over the sway that the Power of Evil can wield over man—powerful if evil preponderates, powerless if good preponderates, in his own mind, but to his own free-will it is left *which* is to preponderate. We are not shown here what the incantations are like; we shall be shown the full rites of one of these later on, *after* we have seen the terrible results these can bring about.

## I, ii.

1.44. A report of the battle in which Macbeth defeats and slays the rebel, Macdonwald, of the Western Isles, is brought in by one who has had a share in it, but who can give only such facts as his limited personal observation may enable him to give. His information is conveyed in confused and stilted language; this is because it is a common soldier who is speaking to a king, and who uses a style that he thinks to be the "correct" one to use in such a presence; his idea of correctness is to speak as differently as he can from the

familiar style he uses with his equals. So, in Bengal, illiterate men may be heard trying to use a "*suddha bhasha*" of their own invention, when speaking to "*bhadra lok*" or the educated. But because of this stilted style, this scene has been "rejected" by critics, and is the first of a long list of "rejections" that this play has suffered from, on various supposed grounds :—such as, for being "un-Shakespearian" (whatever that means), not in "his hand," not in "his style," being "unworthy" of him, not satisfying this or that "test," being meant "to flatter" kings and great ones, meant "to play to the gallery," and lastly "being unconnected with the action." These "rejections" will be noticed as the "rejected" passages come up.

45-69. Macbeth and Banquo defeat Sweno and his army of Danes, who had been joined by the traitorous thane of Cawdor; the traitor is captured, and ordered to execution by the king, and Macbeth is created thane of Cawdor in his place.

## I, iii.

1-37. This is another "rejection," on the ground that this talk is the talk of very low-class, vulgar women; so it is, for witches came mostly out of this class; or on the ground that it has no connection with the action of the play; but it has a connection with it; it is connected with Scene i. There an enigma was set; here that enigma is solved in line 38; and ll. 38 sq. are connected with ll. 1-37 :—In the interval of their very serious business with Macbeth, the witches engage in lighter professional occupations: one amusing herself with work of wanton mischief, just to keep her hand going; another grimly preparing for work of cruel vindictiveness, over a very slight provocation; the third, busy collecting *materia magica* needed in the practice of their profession. In the religion of Satanism, doings like these were called a Witches' Holiday, in which they relaxed themselves, after celebration of Black Mass, on the Witches' Sabbath (see III. v.); and their introduction here gives us an insight into the ordinary life led by witches, and into their natural disposition; that disposition is to *work mischief*, in a small or in a great way, as occasion offers, for the gratification of *malice*, the great innate trait in their character. In ll. 1-37 we find they have worked mischief on



## INTRODUCTION

xvii

their own private account, off their own bat; in ll. 38 sq. they enter upon team-work under orders of their captain, Queen Hecate, in this infernal cricket match against Macbeth. There we see them *at play*, here we see them *at work*; and the "rejected" portion and the "genuine" portion of this scene, taken together, thus present a view of the round of life witches lead; this is the connection between these two portions, and a reason why the former is genuine Shakespeare. As to the other ground—that of vulgarity—witches do not talk like or act like high-born, well-bred ladies; if these witches did so in ll. 1-37, *that* would be a good ground for their rejection.

38-88. They predict good fortune to Macbeth and Banquo. Macbeth takes his seriously, and is eager to know more; Banquo, his, incredulously, and enquires no further.

89-156.. The immediate fulfilment of a portion of the prediction in Macbeth's case, has the effect on Banquo of changing his light-hearted mockery of it into serious alarm that it might be the devil's work. It has the effect on Macbeth of changing his eager expectation into confident exultation, and *at once* he follows the thought that *murder* may realize the whole. The birth-throes of this first thought of murder convulse him, as never subsequent births of similar thoughts will. He clings to the hope that complete realization may come about without needing the commission of that crime by his own hands. If Fate decrees that he is to be king, let the hand of Fate, not his hand, kill the king, and make him king instead.

### I, iv.

The king meets his two victorious generals. His affectionate greetings to both are received, by the one with a studied formality that rings as coming from a false heart, by the other with a simple response coming straight and true from the heart. The title that the king confers on his eldest son, making him thereby lawful heir to the throne, kills Macbeth's scruples about himself committing the murder; now it is to be, not the hand of Fate, but his own hands, that will kill the king. At the very moment when this resolve is made, we see the unsuspecting old man, whose life is to pay for it, speaking of the man who will exact the payment, with perfect trust; going, in



that trust, to visit him at his own castle; and never dreaming that he is walking into a death-trap.

## I, v.

1-30. Lady Macbeth reads her husband's letter about the prediction, and how much of it has come true; and her words, after she has read it, show that she has read aright her husband's nature, so far:—hesitation before he resolves, and hesitation after he has resolved; they also show her own nature, so far:—instant resolution, and instant carrying it out. As the action progresses, we shall see both change, and change a great deal. We shall see how entirely she has mistaken his nature; and how, all unconscious that she is doing so, she speaks with a terrible irony of the fiendish cruelty of her nature—in fact, how little she knows her own nature, destined to a terrible breakdown in its powers of resolution and action.

31-72. She is quickly put to the test by the messenger's announcement that the king is coming. Its suddenness, for a moment, takes her aback, but next moment, her nature re-asserts itself; she resolves that Duncan must die, and die *by her own hands*. But we shall see that it is not she who kills him, or could bring herself to kill him, or kills, or could kill, any one. She, the woman of instant resolution, only talks of doing the deed; her husband, the man of doubts and hesitations, does the deed. Macbeth arrives, looking like a murderer before he is one; she tells him what looks he should bear on his face, whatever thoughts may be in his mind; let him only do this, and leave the rest to her.

## I, vi.

For all this tutting, when Duncan arrives at the castle, it is the chatelaine alone who welcomes him; for the castellan cannot yet bear to show his face. His absence calls forth a passing notice from the guest, to which the hostess gives an evasive reply.

## I, vii.

1-27. True, Macbeth has resolved on the murder; but *pros* and *cons* come up thick in his mind:—"If I murder him, I may get all



## INTRODUCTION

xix

that I wish for in this world; if I do get that, I care little about the next world, and about what God's judgment against me there might give me; but there would still be the judgment of men to be faced here in this world. If I kill one who is my king, my kinsman, my guest, one who has been just in rule over his subjects, one dear to them all, one against whom no act of misrule has made an enemy amongst them—why, if no eye on earth were to see my deed, and no mind to suspect it, heaven itself would send its messenger to denounce me to all the earth." What *words* are these! What a *deed* soon follows them!

28-82. And, so, to his wife who enters, he flatly refuses to have anything more to do with "this business". She retorts—"Was it not you who wrote to confide to me your design in this business? Were you drunk when you wrote so, and are you sober now when you say you have not the courage to carry it out? You say you have the courage to do all that a man dare do. Cannot a man dare do a murder? Is it only a beast that dare do it? And were you a beast when you wrote to me that you meant to do it? No; you are a man, and you will be all the more a man, if you dare do it. Do it *now*. When you wrote, neither time nor place was suitable, and yet you said you yourself meant to make both suitable. Now that they have made themselves suitable without your having to make them so, do not draw back; fear not you will fail; you *shall* not fail, if only you resolve not to fail; screw your courage up to that resolve." Once more, thus incited, does Macbeth change his mind; he says he will resume his false heart, and wear a false face to hide the change. It should be quite clear from this that, in a letter, not read out in the play, it was Macbeth who had suggested the murder, and himself as the man who was to carry it out; and that his wife, now seeing him hesitate, reminds him of what he had written and *sworn* that he would do. This should be remembered when we apportion the guilt between them.

### II, i.

1-28. Banquo, once the light-hearted scorner of witches and their predictions, is now also a changed man. He has been thinking about them, he has been dreaming about them, they have haunted



him awake or asleep, as they have haunted Macbeth; but O the difference! The result in his case has been to make him pray to God to save him from the cursed thoughts they suggest—thoughts that he dare not utter even to himself. The result in the other's case has been to make him seek to know further from the agents of the devil, name to himself the thought that haunts him to be that of murder, write to his wife about it, and resolve to carry it out by action. Macbeth now sounds Banquo for countenance and support in "that business". Banquo, with a clear conscience, accords them to him, provided that nothing is required of him that will conflict with his loyalty to the king; for "that business" has not *all* been revealed to him, but only darkly hinted at.

29-64. The hour approaches, and Macbeth's nerves are highly strung too, but it is at the vision of a blood-stained dagger, and of the spirit of murder, not with a struggle of conscience against temptation, or with an appeal to God in prayer. For him, witchcraft is again busy at this hour, sending abroad the spirit of murder to enter into the murderer and inspire him, and holding that visionary dagger before his eyes to point the way; and with the reassurance of aid from the infernal accomplices, Macbeth moves stealthily towards his victim.

## II, ii.

1-15. Lady Macbeth has been supreme in inciting her husband to action; but she is very much inferior when her turn comes to take action herself. She needs the stimulus of drink before she can even enter the fatal chamber; when she does so, it is only to lay the dagger ready, not to thrust "her keen knife" into the sleeping old man, as she had sworn she would do. She cannot do it now, merely because he looks so like her father! She does not do it now, though she had said she would dash out her infant's brains sooner than not do it! We begin to see now the difference between words and deeds—to see that deeds, not words, make a fiend, that Lady Macbeth is not a fiend, but a woman, that she is not a Medea who could coolly dismember her children, limb by limb. Her eyes fixed on the object of her ambition, she sees nothing that can stand in the way of her

BEV 714



## INTRODUCTION

xxi

attaining it; when it comes to taking action for its attainment, she shrinks from taking it; fiends and Macbeths do not do so.

16-75. The deed done, both feel the tension of mind the doing of it brings on. In Macbeth's case, it finds outward expression in a frenzied outbursts of remorse, that soon passes off leaving no lasting effect; for within a few hours he commits two more similar deeds. In Lady Macbeth, it leads to a silent, inward gnawing, that keeps growing in fierceness and ends in her madness and death; but before others she suppresses all outward expression of this inward pain, and now and again later on, ministers soothingly to her husband's ravings.

### II, iii.

1-21. This is another "rejected" passage, because it is so "low", and therefore so "un-Shakespearian". Its lowness staggered Coleridge, made Voltaire pity the "barbarian" genius who wrote it, and made Schiller substitute a song to the morning lark for it. The passage is all genuine Shakespeare, for two reasons : (i) for *contrast in character*, (ii) for *relief of tension in action*. The porter's character is one of the many which, by contrast with Macbeth's, make Macbeth appear the *lowest* in moral worth, lower than even his low, vulgar, obscure menial servant. The porter's character (as drawn afterwards) will show this more fully. The other reason is : as long as the castle-door remains closed, the knowledge of the horrid crime is confined within it, while outside it there wait those who are ignorant of it; when the door is opened, the pent-up crime flies, as it were, out of it, and proclaims itself to all the world; and, therefore, the porter, the porter's language, the porter's delay in opening the door, all help the action; the gross pleasantries of that language relieves the horror of the dead; the close but unconscious relevancy of that language to that deed shows that the same mind conceived, and the same hand wrote, both the Porter's speech as well as the passages describing the deed.

42-63. Talk on indifferent matters is succeeded by talk on ominous signs given forth by Nature, vaguely presaging some horror and then the horror itself bursts, in all its gruesome reality, upon the assembled guests, both those lodged within the castle, and those just admitted into it.

GS 2732



64-147. Genuine grief and horror of the innocent, pretended grief of the guilty, alarm of the young princes, succeed the revelation of the crime. To that pretended grief, two particular incidents are added: one is Lady Macbeth's fainting, which is real, and is the first indication of that reaction which has been setting in within her, and which she has hitherto succeeded in dissembling; the other is Macbeth's quickly revived murderous activity. He who had a few hours ago raved that he "would go no more" into that chamber of death, goes a second time into it, and commits two more murders, calculated, cold-blooded, which his cunning ascribes to "love" for Duncan and "fury" against his supposed murderers. Once only was Lady Macbeth supreme over her husband—in incitement to his first crime; now and henceforth she loses this supremacy, and never incites him to any subsequent crime. Once he needed her incitement; henceforth he needs it not, but proceeds to all the crimes on his own sole initiative, but consulting the witches, henceforth his trusty counsellors, in place of his wife.

## II, iv.

There is now public consternation as the news of the murder has been spreading, and, as usual, there are wilder and wilder exaggerations as the news spreads wider and wider. The plain truth is—"King Duncan has been murdered on a stormy night." Out of this grows and grows fiction, and the talk between Ross and the Old Man is a specimen of how it grows, and how all people, high and low, old and young, may be equally ready to take fiction for fact. The thane stands for the "higher classes" and for the young, the Old Man for the "masses" and for the credulous old; and between the two there is a sort of match or rivalry as to who can cap a big prodigy with a bigger prodigy; and the earl beats the churl! No doubt both half believe, and would like to believe the whole of, what they say, for these are superstitious times. To us their talk is mere "tall talk", quite harmless, spread by common rumour. But *somebody's* tongue has set going an envenomed rumour by its side; the young princes have fled, and *somebody* has given out that it is *they who* have murdered their father, by suborning the grooms to do the



## INTRODUCTION

xxiii

deed, and that the good Macbeth, in righteous indignation, has slain the grooms.

### III, i.

1-72. Macbeth has attained all that the witches had predicted for him. Why then should not Banquo hope that their prediction about him also should come true? He does hope, but into that hope there never enters the thought of crime to realize it. Macbeth fears that Banquo hopes, and he fears because he suspects that, to realize that hope, the thought of crime *must* enter Banquo's mind (as it had entered his own)—“Banquo *must* be thinking of murdering me, that his issue might be kings; it is then to make *his* issue kings that I have made myself a murderer; in his presence I, his king in name, feel myself to be an inferior to him, my subject in name, but, because of his noble nature, a king over me in reality; rather than feel thus and fear thus, I should remove Banquo and his issue out of my sight and out of my way.”

73-142. For this purpose he finds two wretches ready to his hand. They have been oppressed and ill-treated by Macbeth through his secret agents, but are now led by him to believe that it is Banquo who has thus wronged them, and not his own “innocent self”; though a word from his lips could send Banquo to public disgrace and death, yet, for reasons of state, his punishment must be wrought in secret. “Will they do that work, and so make their king their friend for ever?” These two men are among many others who have been sufferers from Macbeth’s treachery and cruelty; and with diabolical cunning he converts them into his willing instruments against others.

### III, ii.

Lady Macbeth, now queen, counts up what queenship bestows and what it costs; the account shows “nothing gained, all lost”; and with a moan she utters this to herself. But to her husband, who again pours forth his fears that enough has not been done, that more remains to be done, she is a soothing minister, concealing her own pain. He proceeds however:—“The snake is scotched, not killed;



I eat in fear of it, I dream in sleep of it. Duncan is happy in his grave; could not *somebody else* also be made happy by being sent to his grave, and could not I be relieved at the same time of these terrors that haunt me?" This seeming remorse at Duncan's murder is a cunning feeler thrown out by him to see how his wife takes the hint about Banquo's murder that he has already resolved upon, without letting his wife know anything before he has so resolved. His present object, *after* he has resolved and planned the details with the two wretches, is to get his wife to lend her help in a very small way:— "Would his good wife pay marked attention to Banquo to-night at the banquet? For *something* is going to happen." "What?" she asks. "Never mind what; only do as I ask you, and, in good time, you will know what it is." And he concludes with further hints conveyed in lofty, poetic cryptics. How supreme was Lady Macbeth's power over Macbeth in the Duncan murder; how subordinate her services under him are in the coming Banquo murder! She was then his heroine of undaunted mettle; she is now only his dearest "chuck" of a wife.

## III, iii.

Banquo is murdered: but still the snake is not killed, for Fleance escapes. A third murderer has been sent by the cunning caution of Macbeth, to be a spy upon the other two, and also to make doubly sure about Fleance; and it is he that notices his escape.

## III, iv.

1-121. Both murder and escape are reported to Macbeth at the banquet, where he and his queen are acting the host and hostess, right royally. Banquo's ghost enters and takes a chair that had been reserved for the king, visible to the king alone, invisible to the rest, just as the king has been regretting the absence of his chief guest. His terror at the apparition throws him off his guard, and makes him scream out things whose full meaning his guests could have seen, if they too had seen the apparition. Then follow Lady Macbeth's reassuring words to the guests spoken aloud, her scathing rebukes to

## INTRODUCTION

xxv

her husband whispered low, the disappearance of the ghost, the recovery of his calmness by the king, the resumption of the banquet, and the king's drinking to the health of the company present, and then—to the health of the absent Banquo—when—re-enters Banquo's ghost! Now follow a second outburst of Macbeth's terror, a second vanishing of the ghost, a second recovery by Macbeth, a loss of all patience by Lady Macbeth, her renewed rebuke again whispered, and her abrupt dismissal of the company. So ends this coronation banquet, in which the ghost of him who is "king by nature" sits in the chair meant for the "king by title" to sit in!

122-144. The two are now alone. Macbeth who, not an hour ago, had been acting like a frenzied madman at the sight of the ghost of his last victim, is himself again; and what does he do but within that hour pitch upon *another victim* to be shortly made! Macduff has not obeyed the royal command to attend the banquet; he must be made to answer for this:—"I have spies in his castle, as I have in that of every other thane, and have heard enough of Macduff from them; but I must first consult my counsellors, the weird sisters. I have now waded up to midstream in human blood that I have shed; if my own good requires it, I shall wade on 'o the other side. All the blood I have shed to make this stream flow for my own good, increases my appetite to shed as much more. If I have shown hesitation or fear in doing what I have done, it is because I am yet young in the art of bloodshed; I need good practice; much yet remains to be done, and it shall all now be done by me, as a master, not an apprentice, in his art, should do it—no sooner resolved upon than done, done before any can suspect that it is going to be done."

In contrast to this frame of mind stands that of Lady Macbeth. The strain of her last effort has exhausted her power of endurance; her fainting at the scene after the Duncan murder was the first sign of incipient nervous break-down; this scene after the Banquo murder is a sign that that acute stage has passed into a chronic and permanent state; she is now apathetic to her husband's heroics, listless to his hints about Macduff, wearily replies to all his active suggestions that he needs sleep. This is the last time that the two meet in the play;



## III, v.

This is another scene scornfully "rejected" as "the work of some hack-writer in the theatre". There is good reason why it should stand. The action of the witches, in getting up their first incantation and in making their predictions, has been *ultra vires* according to Infernal Law, inasmuch as they had failed to give due previous notice to their queen, and invite her presence thereat. The rebuke is received in silent submission, and the queen announces her intention of presiding at this present incantation, that, unlike the first, is going to be performed with full rites before our eyes. It is only after the witches have given terrible proofs of their power over the destinies of mortals, that they are shown to us as being themselves only subjects of a higher power, before "whose anger they are here made to cower". They have brought Macbeth, with their unaided power, so far on the road to ruin; it is their queen herself who is to carry him on along the rest of the way. She orders them to prepare the preliminaries, to which she herself will give the last and supreme touch needed to make them efficacious. This momentous rite is like the momentous operation of "*projection*" in Alchemy. It will consist in "*throwing in*" the "*drop profound*" that she alone can fetch from the moon. The witches, then, who could command the elements, air and water, and engage their services to enable them to sail in a sieve from Scotland to Aleppo, yet have disabilities—they cannot fly up to the moon; and why?—because they are of the earth—earthy. Queen Hecate's speech is wretched doggerel; and it should be so, for the rubric of the religion of hell, like its rites, should be ugly and ridiculous, should not inspire reverence in mortals. As obscene prose is the right thing from the Porter's lips, so is doggerel verse the right thing from Hecate's; and because they are in their right places, Shakespeare himself wrote both. In I. iii was described the Witches' Holiday (their private "Sunday" amusements); here and in IV. i, is described the "Sunday" celebration of the Witches' Sabbath, with all the rites of its Black Mass, solemnized by their High Priestess herself. All the Witch scenes, thus taken together, give a complete picture of the Life and Profession of a Witch, and every one of these



## INTRODUCTION

xxvii

scenes comes from the hand of Shakespeare, and is neither a "corruption" nor an "interpolation".

### III, vi.

Lennox's alert mind had followed Macbeth's deeds step by step, but had reserved judgment till now; for being a man of reason, though young, he is slow to judge, unlike Macduff, a man of intuition, though much older in years, who judged at once. His eyes thus slowly opened to the conclusion from the premises he had been gathering, he gives utterance to it; but he does it in the language of irony. There are two reasons for this:—one is bitter self-reproach for having been so long in coming to a conclusion; the other is wholesome caution, for he is speaking within the tyrant's palace, whose very walls may have ears to hear and tongues to report to him, like any spy. The other lord is one of the lesser thanes; and he brings news of what is brewing in the South—an English army of invasion, sent out by Edward the Confessor, at whose court the elder prince has found refuge, is on its way.

### IV, i.

1-47. This is another "rejection," on the ground that the presence of Hecate is "quite needless," and that it is "un-Shakespearian," and "worked over" by Middleton. Let us see:—Had all this hocus-pocus taken place at the very opening of the play, we would have laughed outright at it; and then, after we saw what it *can do*, made penance by laughing on the wrong side of our mouths. But now that we see all this mummery for the first time *after* seeing what it can do and has done, we do not laugh at all; for we know it to be a terribly efficient means for bringing about a wicked end—nothing less than the destruction of human life. How different are both means and end in the case of St. Edward's miracles—the curing of disease, the saving of human life, through a simple touch after prayer to God! It is wholesome to be made to loathe evil, not merely to fear it. Now, leave out II. 1-47 as *rejicienda* because they are so loathsome, and where is the point in Macbeth's question in I. 48 about something that he does not see being done? Did Shakespeare write this something quite "Shakespearian," and then did somebody



else throw it out (turning Shakespeare out of his own play, as it were) and insert this un-Shakespearian doggerel of his own? Or did Shakespeare altogether forget to write a beginning to this scene, and begin in the middle of it, at l. 48? Let rejectors say. The connection of these lines with I. iii has been stated above under III. v.

48-156. At their first meeting the witches had shown Macbeth the good luck awaiting him; they had laid the trap. At this meeting they show him his impending fate, now that he has been caught in it—they show him the successive steps of his coming ruin, but veiled in such ambiguous, lying mystification, as to fill him with hopes that he will not discover to be false till his last hour comes. Had he stopped here, he might have lived in a fool's paradise. But he insists on being shown more, and is shown the long procession of Banquo's issue who are destined to fill the throne after him. The sweetness of those false hopes was—"No successful rebellion to put a violent end to my life and to a reign of happiness after my own heart in the indulgence of cruelty and crime, and a peaceful death in my bed." The gall of this further vision is—"No issue of mine own to succeed me." At the unauthorized first meeting, the three witches had been able to foresee and tell him the bare fact; at this second meeting, nothing short of their queen's "drop profound" from the moon, could have made the cauldron boil and bubble to the extent of revealing details in full picture. To be sure, we never see Hecate performing the "projection" of the all-powerful "drop"; but who can doubt that she, invisible, "projects" it—throws it in, invisibly? Is not that more awe-inspiring than the visible stirring of the hell-broth? We see the acolytes doing the work, but we imagine the high-priestess crowning it. The news of Macduff's flight to England makes Macbeth hasten the action he had meant, even before this meeting, to take; and he puts it into execution at once. Henceforth, no sooner will his heart form a wish than his hand will carry it out—there will be no hesitation, no weighing of *pros* and *cons*, as in the days of apprenticeship.

## IV, ii.

Mad ambition has been the bond between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth; married love is that between Macduff and Lady Macduff.



## INTRODUCTION

xxix

The former shared, but for a time only, each other's thoughts and plans; the latter have shared for years, without a break, the happiness of a peaceful life. It is this happiness that Macbeth is now about to break into and destroy. Macduff might have imparted, must have imparted, to his wife his fears and misgivings; but she knows no overt act of his that could make a traitor of him, even in the eyes of a sovereign whom he had, from the first, suspected. Hence, when she hears of his flight, she is wounded there where she would most deeply feel a wound—she is wounded in her wifely affection. She indignantly ascribes his flight to the want of a husband's and a father's affection in him—"He loves us not", "He fears all for himself". Her kinsman, Ross, dare not explain how her husband's wisdom, not his fear nor his want of affection, but too well accounts for his flight; but neither Ross nor Lady Macduff ever dreamt that this flight could call forth the swift and terrible retribution that Macbeth had set on foot. Only a few minutes elapse between the prattle of the precocious little boy, the hasty word of warning given by a stranger at the risk of his life, the arrival of the assassins, and the carrying out of their errand. It is the very swoop of a hell-kite.

### IV, iii.

1-160. Macduff describes to Malcolm the plight of Scotland, where widows and orphans, made so daily, bewail the loss of husbands and fathers, the victims of Macbeth's cruelty. He implores him to join in an armed rising for the tyrant's overthrow. But experience of treachery has made Malcolm, young as he is, old in distrust. He suspects Macduff to be an emissary of Macbeth's, sent out to entice him back to Scotland into his power. Macduff's reply quiets this suspicion; but he puts him to a second test:—an armed rising, he says, may put him on the throne, but Scotland will be no better off—perhaps will be worse off—for the change.—"How?"—Because, proceeds he, of his own character, which is worse than Macbeth's; and he describes the latter, truthfully enough, in very black colours; and describes, in still blacker colours, what his own character will be, if he ever becomes king—one of indulgence in uncurbed licentiousness against the virtue of Scotland's women, and in insatiable avarice



against the wealth of Scotland's nobles, one devoid of every one of a long list of virtues, and so fiendish as to make him long for the pleasure, if he has the power, of destroying all peace and happiness, not in all Scotland alone, but off the face of the earth. Macduff, clinging desperately to hope, replies that licentiousness may yet indulge itself under the cloak of outward decency, avarice may yet be satisfied with a kingdom's lands, and, after all, "a king may take what is his own". "But I have not even one redeeming virtue", says Malcolm—this is the last straw that breaks the back of Macduff's groaning hope, and he indignantly asks if a usurping tyrant can be worse than such a lawful king, than such a degenerate son of parents of such saintly lives as were Malcolm's. Malcolm, in pretending to draw his own character, has indeed truthfully enough drawn Macbeth's, which by this time has, to cruelty and murder, added licentiousness and avarice—indeed, the opposites of all those virtues which he has enumerated. But Macduff's honest indignation removes his last suspicions. He confesses that he has been pretending to be what he is not, and why; he places himself unreservedly in Macduff's hands for his country's service, describes his true character, excuses the false one he has given as meant to test Macduff's own truth and honour. This is the son found to be worthy of his parents, but different from his father in this—the blind trust of the father that, with his throne, had cost him his life, has taught the son a cautious distrust that restores that throne to him. At this happy moment enters the English expeditionary force that is to aid in effecting this restoration.

And this gives occasion for another striking contrast—between the character of the English king who sends it, and that of the tyrant against whom it is sent. Edward the Confessor cures his subjects of the "king's evil" with a healing touch, and has the gift of prophecy. His power of *healing* is the contrast to Macbeth's power of *destroying*; and his gift of prophecy is a contrast to the gift of prediction in the witches—a contrast, because the one is a divine gift, the other, a gift of the devil. Edward's healing and prophetic powers are Divine Magic, like those powers of prophesying and of working miracles that the Divine Power bestowed of old upon the prophets of Israel. This Power has in these days bestowed these gifts upon the English king, whom it destines to overthrow one whom the magic and prophetic-

## INTRODUCTION

xxxi

powers of the agents of Evil have enabled to usurp the Scottish throne. This is the connection of this episode with the main action of the play, and the ethical balance between Good and Evil, now even, and soon about to sway towards the Good, is part of Shakespeare's design. Yet this passage (ll. 140-159) is one among the "rejections", and the most purblind and most fatuous of them all. This passage, it is said, has no connection with the action, and was interpolated by Shakespeare in flattery of King James I, who used to "touch for the evil". There is a connection, as just shown, and therefore there is no interpolation; if King James's touch succeeded in healing, there is no flattery; if it failed to heal, there is no compliment but mockery, if he took the reference to his ancestor to be a side-reference to himself.

161-239. This happy turn in public affairs is clouded by private grief, when the gentle-hearted Ross has to break the news to Macduff. This he does by reluctant degrees, till at last Macduff's peremptory insistence wrenches the truth out of him. Malcolm, with the spirit of a king already in him, and speaking like one, reminds the bereaved man that public vengeance is on the way, and will, in its course, open the way to private vengeance as well. Macduff grasps eagerly at this, and vows that no hand but his own will exact that vengeance.

## V, i.

The silent havoc that has been slowly, steadily wrought on Lady Macbeth's mind, has now advanced far. When we last saw her, she had become indifferent to the course of public affairs (to call them so), and to her husband's large and active part in them. This has, since, intensified, and we now see her in a stage of madness, in which her sickening brain has brought upon her the habit of sleep-walking, during which she has been seen by her attendants to write letters (we remember she had once read a letter before us), and she has been heard by one of them to say things that the attendant declines to repeat to the doctor—so compromisingly suggestive must they have been. Lady Macbeth enters, performing another of her habitual sleep-walking actions—the handwashing, to take off an imaginary blood-stain; and with this action, come words from her lips. Long



ago, not even Macduff, so quick to suspect, had even the shadow of a suspicion that Lady Macbeth was implicated in her husband's crime; but now this action and these words, together, leave no doubt in the doctor's mind of her complicity; they had already left none, or very little, in that of the lady attendant, who had seen this action and heard these words before.

## V, ii.

This scene also is on the list of "rejections". It must stay, for it is introductory to the next scene, and therefore a link in the chain of action. Some days ago, Ross said in England that before he left Scotland "many worthy fellows were out". Here we see an army of these worthy fellows under their leaders—a link with a preceding scene. This army is advancing to meet the English force coming up from the south; the army council here talk of Birnam wood as the place of meeting, and that wood and the deceptive prediction about it are the subject of the next scene. The talk of Macbeth's growing desperation at the spread of the rebellion, and at the growing disaffection among those who still adhere to him; the next scene shows that their talk is right in both these matters.

## V, iii.

The truth of what is known and talked of in the rebel army is confirmed by reports, that come in to Macbeth, of wholesale desertions from his own army, and of the approach of the English army. He recklessly makes light of both to those who bring the news; clings desperately to the predictions about "Birman wood coming to Dunsinane", and about "none of woman born . . . ."; and shouts them aloud to all within hearing. But when he is left alone to himself, his mind turns its eyes on himself, and shows him to himself—what he really is—a miserable old man, friendless, unhonoured, unloved, disobeyed, hated, feared, cursed with low-muttered curses, by all under him, all around him. In restless fits of excitement, he puts on and puts off his armour; enquires of the doctor after Lady Macbeth; asks him if he has no medicine for a diseased *mind*—it may be his

## INTRODUCTION

xxxiii

wife's or it may be his own mind; next moment, tells him to throw medicine to the dogs; asks him again, if he has no medicine for a diseased *kingdom*—no medicine to purge diseased Scotland of the plague of the English army. The doctor's face replies with a silent "No". "Well, I have the medicine—it is—'till Birnam wood . . . . ." rejoins Macbeth.

V, iv.

The Scottish rebel army, now joined by the English army of invasion, *camouflage* themselves at Birnam wood; this novel tactic, so simple, will yet destroy the faith that Macbeth has just placed in the efficacy of his medicine for Scotland.

V, v.

The announcement of the queen's death draws forth no word of grief from Macbeth; after a callous remark that she would have died some day or other, he passes off into a moralizing upon the vanity of human life. Life on earth, he says, is a deception practised upon that fool, man, whose hurry and bustle about so many things to be longed for, planned and plotted for, attained at last to be enjoyed, as he vainly hopes, all end in—**Nothing**. The report of the terrified servant that a wood, three miles away, is advancing from Birnam, rudely shakes Macbeth's desperate faith in the witches' prediction about it—"If I am fated not to die in peace in my bed, I mean to die fighting."

V, vi.

The simple device that falsifies this prediction in which his life or death is involved, is dropped as soon as the allied armies are within striking distance of Macbeth's castle.

V, vii.

1-63. Having thus cut off Macbeth's chances of escape, they force him to give battle, like a bear tied to a stake. Young Siward, slain by Macbeth, is typical of English sacrifices of life in a righteous



cause; but his slayer eagerly clutches at his death as an omen of hope revived—the first prediction has been falsified, but the second will come true; here is earnest of it—for young Siward was "born of woman". At this moment enters Macduff, who is destined to falsify this revived hope. Macduff has been searching for Macbeth, to sacrifice him to the memory of his murdered wife and children, reserving his sword from striking a single blow, so that its first stroke on that battle-field will fall upon the murderer. Part of the garrison revolt and surrender the castle to the allies. At this fresh disaster, Macbeth's first impulse is suicide; but he quickly checks it, and resolves to prolong life, for, he says, it is better to live, himself, and kill others, than to kill himself; and he proceeds to carry out his resolve by indiscriminate slaughter of wretched, common soldiers. Led by the cries of these, Macduff at last comes upon this murderer turned butcher, and brings him, reluctant, to bay—reluctant, for the consciousness of his guilt (we cannot say 'his guilty conscience') is stronger than his sore-tried faith in the predictions, and has made him, for all his loud bluster about the latter, slink away to avoid Macduff. Once again, and for the last time, and this time to Macduff, he brags of the last prediction; the reply shatters his faith in it, and in the witches. "Let no one believe in the falsehood and double sense of the words of the agents of Evil"—these are this criminal's last words of warning to all who might be tempted to follow his example. We saw him deluded by such words of promise; we followed him in the fearful career into which he plunged through faith in them; towards its end, during the few minutes of life that remain to him, we see him a disillusioned man, leaving us, as he goes to his doom, with that confession on his lips. For the wickedly inclined, this is the warning moral of the play; but this is not its conclusion; for there remains another moral to be drawn from it, for those loving to be and to do what is good. This moral is drawn in ll. 64-104. With those lines, and not here, should the play end.

64-104. And yet this passage is yet another "rejection", and the last. Critics, who love the spectacular, find in the clash of clay-mores and the "exeunt fighting", the best of clap-trap endings in stage-craft. But dramatic art requires that the English army should not be left to find its way back without a word of thanks, nor the

## INTRODUCTION

xxxv

Scottish throne be left standing empty. The English have suffered losses in the cause of justice; the death of Young Siward is typical of many similar losses suffered by English fathers, and borne by them as nobly, it is to be hoped, as Old Siward bears his. For him, and for them, Malcolm feels much at heart, and we expect him to express in words what he feels; these words he does utter, directed to Old Siward, but applicable to all bereaved fathers. Macduff had sworn an oath, and we await its fulfilment; he fulfils it, and we see him here with the proof in his hand. Macbeth, the usurper, had got himself crowned at Sccone, the crowning-place of lawful kings of the Scots; the present lawful king must purge this desecration, and be himself crowned on the old Stone of Scotland. Therefore these lines are part of Shakespeare's design of the action, and are the work of his hands, and the proper ending of the play.

## IV

## Characters

## Duncan

The mild disposition, the indulgent rule, of this king meets with ingratitude from one of his thanes, who mistakes mildness for weakness, and rises in rebellion; the rebellion is quelled by a near kinsman of the king, who is also the first nobleman of the kingdom. This service receives generous recognition from the king in new honours bestowed on his kinsman; but this generosity is destined to meet with a return in ingratitude from its recipient. This second act of ingratitude and its consequences are the subject of the action of this play. Its cause, as far as the king is concerned, is a fatal weak point in his otherwise amiable character—namely, his blind undiscriminating trustfulness. His misplaced trust leads, in the one case, to an unsuccessful rebellion against his rule; in the other case, it is going to lead to a successful plot against his life; in both cases, at the hands of men whose loyalty he has trusted, though blindly mistaken in his trust. In the strength of this virtue of goodness,

a fatal weak point is laid bare, when this goodness sees no ill where no ill seems. This blindness to the ingratitude of others towards whom he overflows with goodness, is changed into a keenness of vision, as abnormal, that makes him see ingratitude *in himself*, where other eyes can see none. His eyes see the "very sin of ingratitude" in himself, because he thinks he has delayed (nobody else thinks he has delayed) in rewarding those who have just rendered him a service! He makes amends by bestowing further rewards upon them and upon other thanes; and—fatal mistake—he confers an honour upon his elder son. Ingratitude has already set on the move a design against his life in the breast of his kinsman; the honour bestowed on the son applies a spur to that design. To make further amends, he announces his royal pleasure—fatal mistake again—to visit the castle of the man whose mind harbours this design. That castle he innocently admires, and, when he enters at its doors, he little dreams that he will never come out of them alive. In this admiration of an inanimate thing, he shows—we may well fancy this—the same blindness that he shows in his admiration of human beings—he no more suspects this castle of being his death-trap than he suspects its lord and lady of being the trap-layers. The lady of that castle he greets with words of perfect trust in her loyal, loving hospitality, little dreaming that under her gracious welcome she conceals her resolve that her own hands will take her guest's life. Before retiring for the night, he sends her a rich gift for her hospitality, while at the same hour she is preparing the means for carrying out her resolve. This is the last of all good Duncan's acts of blind generosity during life that we see. We see him (Lady Macbeth tells us) a few minutes before he is stabbed to death, lying placidly asleep, and looking so like her father that she could not carry out her resolve and stab him herself. (Shakespeare has the gift of making not only the living during their waking hours, but the living during sleep, not only the sleeping, but the dead and the ghosts of the dead, powerfully influence human thought, feelings, and conduct.) We see him again after his death (it is his murderer's guilty conscience that so shows his victim to him, and his words that so show the victim to us) sleeping in peace in the grave, where ingratitude cannot reach him in death, as it did so often in life, free from

## INTRODUCTION

xxxvii

all those ills and fears of ills that now destroy the peace of mind of his murderer. Those who would disturb this peaceful sleep, and would seat Duncan's ghost, all blood-stained, at the table at the banquet, would be desecrators of the grave of the dead; yet critics have attempted this. In what we have thus seen of Duncan in the play during life, one single trait of character is brought into prominence, and made to throw all other traits into the background; this is done to make Duncan *a type*—the type of blind goodness of nature. In what we read of him in history, many traits, good and bad, are found in him, and make of him only an individual of mixed character. In what our fancy loves to see him after death, his peaceful repose is the justice done to his soul for what he had suffered in life.

Reader, look back to what you have read of the Duncan of history, and see if you find any resemblance to the Duncan of the poet's creation. Ask yourself for which of the two you are the better—for *knowing* the character of a *real man*, or for *feeling* for the character of an *ideal man*; very likely you will reply, "I am the better for feeling so, than for knowing thus"; and in this way is poetry a better teacher than history.

**Macbeth**

Macbeth is the *type* of a character of which "*Mr. Badman*" is another, whose "life and death" Bunyan relates. I will not call him "a hero", merely because his name gives the play its title; moreover, I have not come across a clear definition of a hero given by critics who are satisfied with this titular claim. Let us see how Macbeth can claim the title of a thoroughly *bad man*. That ingratitude, wholly imaginary, which Duncan needlessly charged himself with, was very real in Macbeth. It grew out of his inborn nature, into which his own words give us an insight; when, an old man, he was nearing his end, he tells us that, when a boy, he liked to read stories that filled him with horror—stories that in our days we call "*penny dreadfuls*", which boys with that morbid taste like to read, and which we fear might lead them, when grown up, to become bad men. The Macbeth of history, very likely, could neither read nor write, when a boy or

when commander of Scottish armies, and, very likely too, would have disdained these accomplishments of "clerks and monks". It is the Macbeth of the play who, when a boy, liked this poison for the mind, and, with fearsome liking, made it its food. The inward corruption wrought within was a *Love of Evil*, which gave no outward sign during the years that his brains showed themselves in military talent, and raised him to the command of armies, while his heart was rotting within. This was the condition of Macbeth's mind, when, flushed with victory, he met the witches for the first time. It is a mistake therefore to say that, before this meeting, Macbeth was by nature a noble-minded, innocent-hearted man, with an innate love of goodness in him, and that it was the witches who perverted and corrupted this nature. Banquo meets them at the same time; they predict good-luck alike to both; but the effect of the predictions is different on them; the difference is due to a difference in their natures, which effects an attraction in one, and a repulsion in the other. Between the nature of the witches and that of Macbeth shaped beforehand and independently, there is what Leibnitz calls a "pre-established harmony", Goethe, an "elective affinity", what science calls "chemical affinity", or the attractive forces of "gravitation" and "magnetism", and we call "like going to like". Before ever they meet, the two use the same language, almost the same words, by a kind of unconscious sameness in their natures. The witches say "Fair is foul and foul is fair", Macbeth says "So foul and fair a day I have not seen". This is an ill omen that makes us fear that those who use the same sort of language are brother and sisters, using what they have learnt from the same parents, the Devil and his dame, Hecate, who calls him her "son"—the adopted son of these, his spiritual parents, while Sinel and Lady Sinel were but the parents of his body. This Love of Evil, this Love of the Bad, is the very root of his character, born in him at his birth, silently growing in him with his growth, revealing itself to his own eyes now, when in manhood he meets his spiritual sisters and sees his inborn nature reflected in theirs. From this root, ever since this meeting, branches spring up—Ambition, Cunning, Hypocrisy, Cruelty, and later on, that whole host of vices of which we have the list from Macduff's and Malcolm's lips. In the predictions of the witches he sees a meaning



## INTRODUCTION

xxxix

that they wish him to see, that he himself likes to see, that ingratitude tells him it is not at all wrong to see. One prediction is fulfilled; its fulfilment sharpens his appetite for the fulfilment of the other; and the Love of Evil, now in active strength in him, suggests to his mind, without any suggestion of it from the witches, the means for that fulfilment. That means is—*murder*. The first thought of it produces a violent shock in him; but so had his *reading* about murder done; years ago, "his fell of hair would rouse and stir" at the reading of a "dismal treatise"; but he went on reading more dismal treatises. Now, "the thought of murder, yet but fantastical", "unfixes his hair" and makes his heart throb; but he commits that murder; neither hair stands on end, nor heart beats violently, when he proceeds to commit a second murder; on the contrary, he gives us very good reasons why he should commit it. The first great crime gains him the object of his ambition, the second is meant to prevent others from taking away from him through murder what he himself gains through murder. 'Banquo for the sake of the prediction to him, is sure to murder me, unless I murder him beforehand'—this is his craven Fear, quite groundless, for Banquo never dreams of murdering him; also, "Banquo's issue must not be allowed to be kings after me"—this is his dog-in-the-manger Selfishness, for he has no issue of his own, and therefore what harm if they do? But for these, to him good reasons, he commits his second great murder; its commission only puts him into a terrible fright, which soon passes away. Ambition gratified, Fear removed, but Selfishness baulked, a fresh branch—Cruelty—now springs up from that prolific root, Love of Evil; and thinks Macbeth thus—"I have now shed much blood; people hate and suspect me; they say, and I know it to be true, that both before and after I have been their king, all that I have done has been evil, and nothing good. Well! Evil, be thou my Good, and for this my own Good, I shall shed more blood, shall kill all whom I suspect and hate—no, but better still, I will take a bond from fate, make doubly sure—by killing without waiting to suspect." Acting on this revised rule of murder, he selects the first in rank among the living thanes as the victim—and he escapes! First Malcolm and Donalbain escaped, next Fleance escaped, and now Macduff escapes. This will never do; it cannot be allowed to go on, and henceforth



the rule must be—"Kill as soon as resolved upon; kill the innocent, if the guilty escape; kill wholesale, the innocent and the guilty alike together." Under this new, revised rule, follows the third great act of murder—that of an innocent mother and her innocent little ones, and, with them and after them, wholesale murders all over Scotland, and all "for his own good". But they turn out to be all for his own evil; for the wail of orphans and widows raises rebellion at home, and armed intervention from abroad. Both combined bring him to see that the most thorough policy of evil does not bring him "his own good". Despair makes the Fiend or the Madman or the Wild Beast in him break out in an orgy of indiscriminate slaughter for the sake of the sheer pleasure of killing, in the midst of which Macbeth bids farewell to life on earth. These are the stages in a *murderer's progress*, such as Hogarth might have painted in a series of pictures to be named so. In this life-history of a Man of Blood, which from his own words and actions we trace from boyhood to death, there once had been the knife-edge of an "equilibrium that kept the giddy line midway", as it did in the lives of the "honest thief, the tender murderer, the superstitious atheist", instanced by Bishop Blougram, who himself, sleeping, believes, and, waking, disbelieves, in Browning's *Men and Women*. The last moments of that equilibrium in Macbeth's life were those in which he uttered that speech before he determined on his first murder. After that utterance and that deed, is there not an even descent along the slope that leads into Hell? Is not this descent one of a uniformly accelerated motion down an incline? And do we find that Macbeth's "imagination" or his "native love of goodness" as a critic calls it, succeeds in placing any jerks or jolts or bumps in its way? Love of goodness he never had; imagination he had, but it never deflected him from the commission of crime. Let us see how it never did. A vivid *imagination* which rises to poetic heights in the Macbeth of the play, but which, I think, is never found in murderers in real life, repeatedly paints pictures full of the beauty, of the pathos, of the terror, that poetic imagery can inspire; but a vivid imagination cannot atone for, cannot mitigate the charge of moral depravity. His picture of pity as a naked, new-born babe does not deflect him from the murder of Duncan; his agonized cries about "Amen" and "Macbeth shall sleep no more", do not



## INTRODUCTION

xii

deter him from two murders more, nor keep off sound sleep from him after; his lament for the loss of that "eternal jewel", his soul, and his longing "to be with the dead", do not prevent him from murdering Banquo. His poetry takes a savage turn over the murder of the Macduffs, and a cynical turn at the death of his own wife. Let the fine flights of his imagination be taken by one who never commits the crimes that Macbeth commits after taking them, and we shall be glad to see some connection between imagination and moral sense. When we see imagination and crime always going together, as they do in the case of Macbeth, we can only think all the worse of the criminal. A callous murderer, like Bill Sikes, is a better man than a murderer with a sensitive imagination, like Macbeth. No one says that Bill ever had a moral sense, and no one blames him for not having it, for nature had denied it to him; every one would blame him, if she had given it and he had flung it away. Critics say that Macbeth had a moral sense, and that he struggled to retain it, and that the witches snatched it away from him; and they produce his first poetic flight as a proof. It is no proof; for no man who had a moral sense would ever discuss the question of murder—God's command "Thou shalt do no murder", enforced by man's law, would place that subject outside the pale of discussion. Macbeth discusses the subject, and with him it becomes a question of *prudence*. The plain prose of that fine piece of poetry is this:—"If on killing the king I could escape consequences on earth at the hand of man, I care very little for any consequences at the hand of God; the king's character is such that his murder will be sure to raise a storm of execration and retribution against me that I fear to face. My ambition makes me think of murder to realize it, but ambition like this is sure to bring its punishment here on earth." This prose shows two things:—  
(i) Macbeth has no fear of God, and (ii) he predicts his own fate; even before the witches predict it for him. Macbeth, then, has no moral sense. He has no sense of *religion* either; but critics claim this also for him, and bring his cry about "Amen" as a proof. It is no proof; but, most clearly, after his disavowal of any fear of God, it is a case with him of "The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be: the devil was well, the devil a monk was he!" It is sudden terror that makes him wish to pray; the terror passes off, and soon



after he is again at his work of murder. This is not a sense of religion But more : in addition to the traits of character noticed already, he develops others—all of them vices—as we come to know in the scene between Malcolm and Macduff :—lechery, avarice, lying, deceit, malice—"smacking of every sin that has a name". It is Malcolm who speaks thus, repeating what he has heard, partly at least, from Macduff ; and Macduff spoke it before he heard of his own cruel wrng. and wholly on behalf of Scotland. We may discount what we think reasonable to do so, but enough remains to discredit any claim either to morality or to religion. Let us see what remains. Before committing his first murder, he left it to the friendly hand of Fate to raise him to the throne that her friendly voice had promised him, and then took it out of her hand, for quicker despatch, into his own, defied God for any consequences He could send, and committed the murder. The planning and execution of his second murder he kept all in his own hands (as he did all his subsequent murders), and defied Fate, his discarded friend, to bring about any consequences but the one he meant to bring about. With the thought of the third murder—that of a family—in his head, he, who had defied God, defied Fate, transfers his faith to the Devil, and puts his trust in his agents on earth, the Weird Sisters. He gratefully remembers their past predictions and seeks for more; they predict more; the new predictions fill him with joy; he asks them for still more; they predict again, and his joy is dashed with disappointment. He resolves to discard these guides, and henceforth to be his own, sole guide. The guidance he gives himself is this :—"Macbeth, continue to wade through the river of blood that your own hands have made to flow through all Scotland; continue to keep that river flowing by shedding more blood to feed it." In the retribution that follows, his eyes are fully opened to the nature of the new predictions and of the old—they were all deceptions. He denounces the Devil, whose religion by final choice he has followed, as a deceiver. This, then, is "Macbeth the religious". To him, God was too far off to be able to touch him. Fate was too slow to suit him, and the Devil has artfully cheated him; and he renounces them, one and all. In the *exit* of such a creature from life, there can be no "tragic grandeur" that some critics think they see in it.



## INTRODUCTION

xliii

### Banquo

Macbeth's hatred of Banquo makes him speak the truth about Banquo's character when he gives the reason of his hatred. He hates him for that "royalty of nature" which makes him, Macbeth, his king by title, feel himself to be his inferior—the inferior of one who is his subject by law, but who is his superior by nature; who, like a true king, is dauntless and dares much, but who, like a king, is also wise; whose wisdom keeps his courage ever within the bounds of safety; who might use this courage combined with wisdom and with safety to himself, to get Macbeth out of the way, that his, Banquo's, issue might be kings—"He might kill me, as I have killed Duncan." Macbeth too was dauntless, but he was not wise; while his want of wisdom made him madly ambitious, the other's possession of it made him shun unlawful ambition. The one vaulted, and vaulted too high, missed and fell; the other rode firm and safe in the stirrups, and foul play, not ambition, made him fall. The one had a conscience, a moral sense of right and wrong, that kept him straight; in the other, conscience was by nature too weak to keep him from going wrong in the first trial, and by continued disuse in subsequent trials, became atrophied, deadened, and at last altogether stone-dead. The predictions of the witches to both were so nicely balanced between the two—"less, yet greater", "not so happy, yet much happier"—that if they were men of the same character, each might have rested satisfied with what was predicted of him, leaving it to time to clear their enigmatic language. Not being so, but being different in character, the one takes them quite seriously, the other with indifference; the one wants to have more, the other is incredulous of what he has already heard—"We must have lost our reason and gone mad" he says; the one harps upon what they have heard, the other banters him over it. The immediate fulfilment of one of the predictions effects a change in both; but the change keeps them as far apart in character as they were before it. Banquo becomes serious in an instant—"What we saw was the devil in these three shapes, and what the devil said has come true in one instance; but, my soul, beware! for when the devil speaks the truth, it is a bait he throws out to tempt you to your ruin." Here speaks Banquo's wisdom, and



sums up in four lines the moral lesson of the play that Macbeth's folly points. Macbeth too changes : his heart is elated at the quick fulfilment of the first prediction, and throbs guiltily at the thought of the crime that *must* be committed to bring about the fulfilment of the second. He had spoken guardedly to Banquo on it, but enough to let him see the drift of his mind towards the crime, and to sound him as to what support he might expect from him—mere passive acquiescence, or decisive approval, or active help—for motive must be strong in both, the fulfilment of the prediction about Banquo's issue depending, as it did, upon the fulfilment of that about Macbeth. This had sunk deep in Banquo's mind ; it haunted him, and most distressingly in the silent hours of night, keeping sleep away from his eyes, and when at last they closed in uneasy sleep, haunting him in his dreams, and making him dread to go to sleep, though oppressed nature called for sleep. This had been the state of his mind for some time, and is so now, when on that night he is about to retire to bed in Macbeth's castle. He prays to merciful Heaven to save him from the visitation of the accursed thought of becoming an accomplice in a crime—*what* crime he knows not—as Macbeth has tried to make him be. He meets him a few minutes after, and is reminded by him of "that business". His reply is prompt, as if Heaven has granted his prayer, and inspired him with that reply—"I shall do all for you that I can, provided it is consistent with my sense of honour as a man, and of loyalty as a subject"; and this means "I cannot help you to commit a crime." When the murder is denounced by Macduff, when Macduff and the two sons at once suspect Macbeth of it, Banquo, though he knows much more about "that business" than any one else, keeps his mind open to come to a conclusion, only when proofs are conclusive. Meanwhile he places himself "in the great hand of God", to have his "fears and scruples" cleared up, and his arm strengthened to fight "against treasonous malice". His conscientious nature works slowly in gathering, weighing, judging evidence before condemning ; and it is not till he is again a guest of Macbeth, now king, that he gives expression to his condemnation—"You have it all now, and you played most foully for it"; and the thought in his mind is—"If you have all that was predicted of you, why may not I also have all that was predicted of me"; and the firm reservation that goes with



## INTRODUCTION

xlv

this thought is—"without my playing foully for it". Foul play soon follows again, and this time he himself is the victim. Macbeth thinks he has now done with Banquo and with his fears from Banquo; but Banquo, though dead, has not done with Macbeth. Banquo's ghost comes to charge him with the crime; and the charge is the more awful, because it is made in silence, and yet is undeniable. Macbeth tries to deny it, but the assembled guests, from the very manner of his denial, draw their own conclusions, in silence too. Macbeth's terror, the proof of his guilt, convicts him first before them, and then before the eyes of all Scotland, as the story of the banquet scene spreads over it. In that scene, the ghost sat in the chair reserved for the king; this meant that the ghost took possession, symbolically, of the throne on behalf of his future issue. At the second meeting between Macbeth and the witches, the ghost, who has kept his eyes on Macbeth all along, appears again to him, still bloody with wounds, but smiling and pointing to the procession of his issue filing before him, and silently saying "You murdered me to keep my issue out of the throne, but you will not succeed in doing it."

This then is Banquo's character. A different view of it makes him a criminal, and his murder a "punishment"; makes him out to be a minor criminal—one only in thought, while Macbeth was a major criminal—one in both thought and action; makes him ambitious for the sake of his issue, while Macbeth became ambitious for himself;—thus making both impressed in the *same* way by the predictions of the witches. To bring about the satisfaction of his ambition, one way would be for Banquo to harbour the *thought* of murdering Macbeth, which Macbeth forestalled by murdering Banquo; and this was Banquo's "punishment". Another way would be to wait for Macbeth's natural demise without leaving issue, when Banquo's would stand a chance of succeeding him; this would be no crime, and his murder would be no "punishment". Banquo's speeches, Banquo's actions, belie this view of his character. Shakespeare did not mean to pluck a few sprigs from the laurels of Macbeth, the man of a thousand murders, a *hazari* in murder, to make a sorry crown for a mere would-be murderer. He did not mean to place near the throne of the Sole Murderer a little younger brother, whom he could not endure, any more than the Turk



or Addison could bear one to be near *his* throne. No more serious refutation of this view is needed.

### Macduff

After dealing with that attempt to blacken Banquo's character by levelling it up to Macbeth's in criminality, with the difference that the one is a successful, the other an unsuccessful villain, we have to deal with an attempt to "flatten out" a group of characters, among which Macduff's is the first, so as to give Macbeth and Lady Macbeth outstanding prominence, by sculpturing them "in high relief". Macbeth can stand forth in all his prominence without the help of this flattened background. Shakespeare never "flattens" any character, from Macduff down to little Fleance in this play, or any character in any play. He always sculptures *in the round*; he does so, because human beings, whose images he sculptures, are made by Nature *in the round*, not *in the flat*—*in three*, not *in two*, dimensions; and Shakespeare is ever faithful to Nature, and his magic chisel can reproduce her creations with two, or with two hundred strokes, as needed. Are not the boy Fleance here, who only tells his father the time, and runs across the stage, and old James Gurney in *King John*, who holds his lady's horse, and speaks about three words, as full before our eyes, as they would be if we met them in real life? It is bad criticism to ascribe "sketchiness" to Shakespeare—for that I suppose is meant by "flattening out"—because, for an artist to be sketchy means that he is a bad artist.

Macduff is a father; Macbeth is childless, and we never hear him utter a word to show that he feels a father's affection, or knows what it means, though he knows the value of a son as successor to a father on a throne. It is to contrast this that Macduff is so richly endowed with a father's love for his little ones, and is so deeply moved when he hears of their end. This emotional nature in private life shows itself in public life also, and contrasts him to Banquo. Like him he is loyal, but his loyalty is emotional—it is towards "the Lord's anointed", while Banquo's is rational—it is towards the head of the state as a human institution. With the quick sensibility of emotional natures, he suspects Macbeth *at once*; his suspicion in a



## INTRODUCTION

xlviij

few minutes becomes certainty, which breaks out in his abrupt question—“Wherefore did you so?” and his searching look, the moment Macbeth says he has killed the two grooms. He is now *sure* that Macbeth is the murderer. His reply to Ross’s enquiry (made after the election of Macbeth to be king, later on the same day, perhaps) is the bitter mockery of irony that repeats the *official story* of the murder (as concocted by Macbeth, and accepted by the thanes assembled for the election), which now must be accepted by all as the true story, at the risk of incurring treason against the new king by a refusal to accept it. Banquo, the *one* man who had the strongest reason to refuse to accept that story, remained silent; for he knew the danger of refusal while in Macbeth’s castle and still within his power, and prudence made him “act in safety”, as Macbeth knew and afterwards said. Macduff acts too quickly for safety. He leaves the castle at once, determined not to trust himself again within Macbeth’s power. He refuses to attend the coronation ceremony, and the state banquet that follows it. He is warned secretly by friends that his life is in danger from the tyrant, with whom the constructive treason implied by these actions is the ostensible reason. the warning of the witches—“Beware of Macduff”—a real cause of alarm, and the guilty consciousness that Macduff has divined his secret is the determining motive, that all combined impel his hatred to action against his life. Macduff knows that Macbeth’s arm is long enough to reach to Fife, and so he flies to England. The news of his escape out of his reach makes Macbeth advance another step in his career of bloodshed. He had murdered Duncan to attain the throne; he had murdered Banquo to be safe on it; he had meant to murder Macduff who knew the secret of both the murders, but he has now eluded him; he will murder Macduff’s wife and children, and make the innocent pay for the guilty; innocence cannot be a plea, if *his own good* requires this payment from it.

In his flight, Macduff carries news of Scotland out with him:—suspects, like himself, great and small, being murdered; the cries of widows and orphans rising to Heaven. He gives this news to Malcolm, and calls on him to redress these wrongs. His despair at his (apparently) pusillanimous drawing back, his large concessions to his (pretended) vices—any one is better than Macbeth, his fresh despair when Malcolm says he is worse than Macbeth, and paints a



lurid picture of himself that well may be a picture of Macbeth—all these show the emotional good nature of the elder man (Macduff is regularly called "the good Macduff"), astutely played upon by the cautious youth to test him. This goodness of Macduff's nature differs from Banquo's, which was safely guided by discerning reason, and from Duncan's, which was blindly undiscerning. After he has satisfactorily passed the test, and secured Malcolm to the cause of redressing the wrongs of Scotland, Macduff has maddening cause for redressing wrongs done to himself. He hears of the cruel murder of his wife and children; it is long before he can believe it to be true; he knew that Macbeth would not stick at murdering men, but till now he thought that even he would stick at the thought of murdering women and children; had he a suspicion, the very shadow of a suspicion, that it was possible for even Macbeth to descend to such depths of inhuman cruelty, he would not have left them behind, when he fled, or he would have stayed by them, come what might to himself. But Macduff has been grievously misjudged in two very different quarters on this point : first, by his wife, whose mistake is the mistake of love, when it fancies it is not returned—"he loves us not"; and next by critics, who misread Shakespeare and fling very hard words at poor Macduff, as being "un-heroic", "not worth a farthing", for "running away to save his life", but who see true "heroism" in Macbeth in the last scene of his life (which they misread), and nothing "un-heroic" in his murdering an innocent woman and her babes, here. At last Macduff is brought to believe in the truth of his cruel loss; and then the full, strong tide of this man's emotional nature carries him forward to be the avenger of a husband's and a father's wrongs. He calls upon Heaven to witness his unalterable resolution, invokes God to forgive the wronger, if he, the wronged, fails to keep that resolution. Henceforward Macduff has one single object ever before his eyes, one single man whose death at his hands will satisfy that object. The battle-field brings that man within his reach; but the man, by some mysterious instinct, each time feels his approach, and slinks out of his way. Macduff has reserved *his* sword for the one stroke that is to take Macbeth's life; Macbeth, while dodging (that is the word) that stroke, imbrues *his* sword with the blood of indiscriminate slaughter. At last, Macduff brings him to bay, disillusioned him as to the last

## INTRODUCTION

xlix

prediction of the devil on which he had staked his last hope, calls him what he is—"a coward", makes him drunk with the courage of despair, slays him, lays his head before the lawful king of Scotland, and proclaims the liberation of his country from the accursed usurper.

## Ross

The character of the gentle Ross, who would not hurt a fly, has been distorted and maligned by one of the most wild and fantastic feats of literary acrobatics, miscalled criticism, under semblance of the most closely reasoned argument. If in actual life a Macbeth had been charged before a high court of justice, and counsel for the defence had pleaded complete innocence for his client, charged the crime on Ross, tried to concoct a diabolical plot hatched by him, to fasten his guilt upon Macbeth, and framed a chain of evidence in proof out of facts like those in the play—I wonder what the judge and jury, knowing the facts of the case, would have thought of such a defence. Yet all this has been done about the Ross of the play. In ancient Greece there were Sophists who took a pride in, and made a profit by, proving that black is white, that the worse is the better reason, and *vice versa*; in our days there are critics who take a pride in proving that in Shakespeare good characters are bad characters (Ophelia, Ross, Octavius Cæsar), and bad ones, good (Gertrude, Laertes, even Macbeth); but they do it all for the glory of it, solely seeking for that bubble, fame, for, unlike the Sophists, they get neither pupils nor fees. In common with all the thanes bracketed together in the list of *dramatis personæ*, and all, except Macduff, merely named in Holinshed, and characterized only in the play, Ross has received very cavalier treatment from other critics; besides being "flattened out", they have been called "men of straw", and their speeches in Act V, Scene ii, said to be "interchangeable in all the ways mathematically possible", by permutations and combinations, I suppose. It will be shown here, and in the Notes below, that this treatment is undeserved.

Ross is a very harmless person, is often called "gentle", is often sent on errands that need gentleness to deliver, fond of hearing his own voice in talk, loving best to adopt the "flamboyant" style in it,

## MACBETH

a very good hand also at "tall talk", a fair-weather courtier fond of social functions, a *khusamadi*, a *mazar lok* at *darbars* and *tamashas* in high life. All this Ross is when waters run smooth. But when the waters become rough and dangerous to those he loves, this Ross's light heart becomes serious, becomes as tender as a woman's. But while he makes us laugh at his weak points, he is even then, as he always is, an amiable fellow—whether he is bringing news of the battle with Sweno, or the news of the honours bestowed on Macbeth, or a young man himself (though on the stage he is got up with a venerable beard), defeating an old man (he calls him "father" reverently) at a match in tall talk about mad horses eating each other, or going off to the coronation at Scone, or attending as a guest the state banquet at Forres Castle. But this fluttering court butterfly is transformed into a human angel, who flies, without wings, to warn Lady Macduff, and then to break the heart-breaking news to Macduff. After that diabolical act, even his harmless life must have been in danger; for he flies, a refugee, with other refugee thanes, out of Scotland. His last errand of consolation is to give Siward the news of his son's death.

With what a wealth of choice, high-flown euphuism does Ross give his good news, how coolly does he tell incredible stories, with what a sense of decency does he call on the guests to rise, "as his highness is not well", how delicately does he try to make Lady Macduff divine the true reason of her husband's flight, how carefully does he feel his way to prepare Macduff to receive the fatal news, and withhold it as long as he can, how, when Macduff will not be put off any longer, he comes out with the news in the plainest language, the harrowing occasion making him forget all his ornate style, how he saves the old Stoic of a father from grieving by telling him *where* his son had received all his wounds—all this the text of the play will prove, and, with it, prove that Ross has been thoughtlessly belittled by undiscerning critics, and grievously slandered by hunters after literary notoriety.

## Lennox

He too has been belittled and libelled (somebody calls him a Paul Pry), but while Ross would have felt this treatment keenly, Lennox

## INTRODUCTION

li

would calmly ask for proofs, for Lennox (a young man too, perhaps the youngest of all the thanes, see II, iii, 62) was all intellect and no emotions; Ross's eyes would have changed their expression with changing feelings; Lennox's had only one wide-open, colourless look, fixed straight on you and everybody else he spoke to or listened to. He goes out with Macbeth to look, with his own eyes, for proofs of what he has heard; in his presence it is that Macbeth stabs the two grooms, after cunningly making him a witness to the circumstantial evidence that points to *them* as being the murderers; and Lennox's reasoning mind makes him rely on that evidence, till such time as any evidence to the contrary may be forthcoming, while Macduff's instinct or intuitive mind, that had at once fastened its suspicion on Macbeth, turns this very evidence into being a certain proof of his guilt; and here instinct is in the right, and reason is in the wrong. He begins to see his mistake slowly (reason oftenest moves slowly, step by step), as new facts about Duncan's murder crop up, as people begin to talk of them and their talk takes an ugly turn, as Banquo's murder follows while he is present at the banquet and sees the scene that happens there; and putting together all that he has seen and heard, his reason at last points to Macbeth. At this belated discovery, he comes out in bitter irony and sarcasm, which is no doubt dictated by ordinary prudence (he is in the king's palace at the time), but is also a reproach to himself for his blindness to the truth for so long. After this discovery, he still maintains the outward appearances of loyalty well enough not to rouse in Macbeth suspicions of him; for we find him accompanying him in the last visit to the witches, and it is in his hearing that Macbeth speaks out his fiendish resolution about Macduff's family. This must have been too much for reason to bear and hesitate over; and Lennox joins, perhaps promotes, the conspiracy of the thanes to revolt. They raise an armed force from among their clansmen, just as in our days the Afghan frontier chiefs raise a *lashkar* from among their *khels*, and his clear intellect gives him the lead in their counsels, though younger than all of them. He enters into correspondence with the English army of invasion; in the army council of the rebel thanes, it is he that moves a resolution (as we would now-a-days say) to march towards Birnam wood; and the last time we see him is when



the two attacking armies have met at Birnam wood, where Malcolm takes over the supreme command of the rebel forces from the army council.

### Menteith, Angus, Caithness

In the Chronicle these are only named among the thanes whom Malcolm created earls; in the play their speeches are not "interchangeable", but characterize them. Menteith is of a fiery temperament, and has a touch of soaring poetry in him, much like Macbeth's, against whose tyranny he would "raise the dead to take arms". Caithness is of a mild temper, sick of the usurper's tyranny, and longing to lay his allegiance where it is due, of a homely imagination which, when it attempts a flight, scarcely rises from the ground—his metaphors are from "belts" and "buckles". Angus is wholly of a matter-of-fact turn of mind, that, with a touch of satire, raises laughter at the council table with a comic simile about Macbeth being "like a dwarfish thief". He alone out of the three figures outside this army-council meeting, when he and Ross are the joint messengers from Duncan to Macbeth; there Angus is plain, prosaic, matter-of-fact, as a contrast to Ross with his flamboyant verbiage, to which he quietly puts a stop.

### Malcolm

Young Malcolm has the reasoning faculty strong in him, like young Lennox, but while the latter's reasoning mind goes steadily in harness, step after step, Malcolm's gallops, covers much ground in a short time, without ever running wild. His is the reasoning power to initiate, such as a king and a man of action should have; Lennox's is that of a king's secretary of state, acting under orders. We meet Malcolm early, soon after he had his "baptism of claymore" in the first battle in the play; he was then a minor, as history says, and his daring in the field nearly led to his capture by the enemy, from which he was saved by the devotion of a henchman, or a *gillie* as he would be called in a Scottish clan-army of highlanders. For this early proof of courage, he is nominated heir to the throne by his father.

## INTRODUCTION

iii

Macduff's cry that his father has been murdered, calls forth his alert question, "O! by whom?". He receives in silence Lennox's wrong answer to it, watches Macbeth's face, manner, language, when he gives his explanation, and silently forms his own opinion; and the moment he is alone with his brother, he shows what that opinion is, when he tells him that neither Macbeth's house, nor all Scotland, is a safe place for them, and acts at once by flying to England. While there (it is for some years, the chronicle says), the natural growth of mind that growing years bring, is quickened by the traps that Macbeth repeatedly lays to entice him back to Scotland, and into his power again, which the precocious wisdom and prudence that adversity brings to the young, teach him to avoid. It is when distrust has thus become a habit of mind with him, that Macduff arrives at the British court, and seeks him out, to enlist his name as a rallying cry for Scotsmen, high and low, who have felt the tyrant's heavy hand, and would shake it off, under the nominal lead of the murdered Duncan's son and heir. In the Notes is given an analysis of the scene that shows how far beyond his years this youth has advanced in knowledge of the art and science of *kingcraft*. He applies repeated tests to Macduff before he is satisfied that he can trust him; and when satisfied, the news brought of Macduff's cruel bereavement gives him an opening for adding the incentive of personal wrongs to that of the wrongs of a whole nation, as a double spur to Macduff's eagerness to place him on his father's throne. When Malcolm sheds a tear at Macduff's bereavement, his eyes are steadily fixed upon that throne, and on that bereavement itself as an accession to the means of attaining it. He assumes command of the rebel army, upon its joining the invading forces; it is he that gives the fateful order about *camouflaging* the advance of the conjoint forces, so that it is his generalship, his strategy (that in this ruse amounts to mere stratagem), that leads to the breakdown of Macbeth's last hope, and to his final disillusionment about the devil's lying promises. The advance to within striking distance thus effected, the order of the attack also issues from Malcolm, who is now placed in supreme command of the combined army, with old Siward and Macduff in command of its two wings. He uses the royal "we" when assigning them these their posts; when the castle surrenders, Siward addresses him with the royal "Sir", as he makes way for



him to be the first to enter it as its king; Macduff, as he lays Macbeth's head before him, addresses him formally as king of Scotland; and it is with words from him, as of a gracious sovereign to loyal subjects, that the play closes; with those words, the thanes who have served him are created earls—the first step taken by the gratitude of Malcolm to the king of England, towards the anglicizing of Scotland's institutions; by his orders will be brought to just punishment the agents and instruments of the late tyranny; through his care will loyal Scots now in exile be recalled to their native land, and restored to their homes. Thus will begin the beneficent reign of Malcolm III (Canmore or Bighead), and the restoration of that peace and happiness to Scotland which it had enjoyed under good king Duncan. And yet there are critics who will not see all this, and who long to see the play end with the words "Hold enough!", and the spectacular display of the "brave fighting" of Macbeth that follows them.

### The Porter

This porter has so shocked translators and critics that the former have substituted a porter who observes the decencies of his office, or replaced him by a poetically-minded watchman, and the latter have pitied Shakespeare's "barbarian" taste, or saved his reputation by pronouncing the porter-scene to be an "interpolation" by one of the hacks or apprentices whom (as they fancy) he employed. It is all Shakespeare's own work; its relevance to the action is explained in the Notes; the relevance of the man who enacts it, is shown here. This porter is meant to be contrasted to his lord and master, and to come out as the *better man*; he comes out, a vulgar, low-bred, drunken, obscene, tip-soliciting menial that he is, as yet the *moral superior* of Macbeth, premier thane of the kingdom of Scotland, and its greatest living leader in war; for, which of the two is the worse man—he of the foul tongue, or he of the foul deed; he who never dreamt of imbruining his hands in blood, though his tongue rolled out the obscene language, or he who had just committed three murders, while his tongue overflowed with impassioned poetry all the while? This is the relevance of the porter's character; and it confers on him the right to be placed in the ranks of those *good men* who, whatever their



## INTRODUCTION

iv

defects in character, whatever their ranks in the social scale, yet in virtue of this *one* trait of character, all stand forth as moral superiors of the black criminal, Macbeth.

### Lady Macbeth

My idea of her appearance is this:—She was a small woman, with a face, a voice, a bearing, that changed, with every movement, at every change in the impulses of a quick temperament, highly strung nerves, and an imperious will. Such impulses are intense as long as they last, but they cannot last long; the nerves become unstrung, the will breaks down; and with these changes the appearance changes in sensitive response. This happened to Lady Macbeth. What a difference is there between what she looked like when she fixed Macbeth's shaky resolution to commit the first murder, and when she spoke of it in her sleep-walking years afterwards! What a difference in her looks when she spoke to him before the guests at the banquet, and when she spoke to him alone after it! Blue or black or gray eyes or eagle-eyes, blonde or dark complexion—all these have been supposed—do not matter a bit about Lady Macbeth, though they may matter something about an actress of her part. Lastly, critics and painters alike have made the shocking mistake of making her out to be a brawny, six-foot Amazon, with the fist and the biceps of a prize-fighter, and the eyes of a tigress.

As her appearance, so has her character been misrepresented; and this, because her speeches and her actions have been misunderstood. Let us trace her character from these in the text. We first meet her when she is reading the latter part of a letter from her husband, telling her of the predictions of the witches; then and there she makes up her mind that the predictions *must* be brought to pass—brought to pass by him and by the nearest way; that nearest way she never names, but she knows it to be *murder*—knows it from her husband, in whose brain was born the thought of it, without any suggestion of it by the witches, and who had written of this infernal birth to his wife, when it was still "fantastical" within him. Once for all, it should be clear that Lady Macbeth never suggested this (or any other) murder to Macbeth. But she fears his hesitating nature, means to



overcome it by her own inflexible will, or, failing, to do the murder *herself* (so she *says*, but let us wait and see). The announcement of the king's coming visit follows on these resolves; she finds in it an indication of the fit time and place to carry them out, tells her husband so, tells him that she will lay the plan, and that he has only to dissemble, and "to leave the rest to her", to which he mumbles out that he would like to speak "further about it" to her. The king arrives, and she acts to perfection that dissimulation which she had tutored him to practise; while she welcomes the king with a bold, unperturbed face of perfect hypocrisy, her husband cannot practise even the little that had been asked of him, and does not show his face, to second her welcome to their sovereign and guest. She presides at the table throughout during supper; he leaves it before it ends; and when she meets him when it is over, there follows that scene of fiery taunts from her, and faint-hearted fears from him; from her own lips we learn that it was *he* who had suggested the idea of the murder, *he* who had sworn to make the time and the place fit, if they did not fit of themselves; they have fitted themselves *now*, and *now* *he* draws back through fear of failing; there can be *no* failure; she will arrange everything for the deed, and for the prevention of its discovery; only let him muster courage enough for the attempt. He at last catches the contagion of her inflexible resolution, and becomes himself fixed in resolve.

While Macbeth is at his dreadful work, Lady Macbeth, alone, and waiting for his return from it, tells us what, after all, was "all the rest" that she had taken upon herself to do; it was not much; and even *that* she could not do without the aid of a stimulant; it is not the callous-looking giantess of Maclise's picture, but a slightly-built woman of keen sensibility, that would need it. He joins her; and this poet-murderer breaks out into one of his spasmodic outbursts of "fine frenzy". To this fit of raving, she applies first the soothing sedative of words—"Think not of it so deeply", and that failing, the sharp antispasmodic of common sense—"Go, get some water, and wash that blood off your hands". When she faces the assembled guests, loud in their outcries at the horrid discovery, her impenetrable self-possession shows itself—it always does in the presence of company—so that at first no one, not even Macduff with his quick intuition, suspects her



## INTRODUCTION

lvii

of complicity. But the reaction has already set in; when she attempts dissimulation again, she does it no longer to perfection, but overdoes it, does it clumsily, so that in calmer moments it would have drawn from observers suspicion of her also. When she hears her husband say he has killed the two grooms, it is more than she can bear—three murders within a few hours, by the man who doubted, hesitated, feared, drew back, so much about committing one; the reaction rushes into a revulsion, and she faints. This then is the woman who *said* she could dash out her suckling's brains, who *said* she would stick her keen knife into Duncan with her own hands, who *said* she would have killed Duncan, but could not, who had to take an intoxicant merely to be able to go and lay the daggers ready, who nerved herself to go a second time into that chamber only that she might shame her husband for saying that he feared to go into it again—this is the woman whose nerves give way when she hears him say that he went into it again, not only that, but killed two more men; and this is the man who *said* he would "go no more" into that chamber, who *said* that "Amen stuck in his throat", who *said* the blood of the first murder on his hands would dye the ocean red (and then committed two more), who *said* it would be best for Macbeth not to know Macbeth, but who recovers himself quickly enough to indulge in a ghastly cynicism about the knocking at the door waking the dead.

Lady Macbeth never recovers from that revulsion of feeling of which her fainting away was the first indication. That night's work has gratified her ambition for herself—it has made her queen of Scotland—but while giving her a crown, it has snatched away her happiness; and this unhappy queen sets off her gain against her loss, has long been brooding over the net result, and now tells us what it is—"Nought's had, all's spent"; she would now rather be dead herself like Duncan, than by Duncan's death be a queen, be dead and out of the reach of misery, than live and be miserable. From that night, or rather that early morning, the two had begun to drift apart, the close partnership in crime between them had been dissolved, mutual confidence had gone; they saw less and less of each other, each living a lonely life and brooding over one's own thoughts. Formerly it was Macbeth who sought Lady Macbeth out to take her

## MACBETH

into his counsels, now it is she who has to send for him to ask why he keeps away from her; she answers her question herself, and, as once she had mistaken him as being full of the "milk of human kindness", now mistakes him again, as being, like herself, full of the gall of remorse for the past, and, poor soul, tries to give him the comfort she herself needs so much—"What's done, is done", "think not so sadly of the past". But—good man—he needs no such comfort, for he is not thinking of the past at all, except as leading to something in the future. It is on this *future* that he has been brooding; his brooding mind has now hatched an idea of which he now, for the first time, gives a cautious hint to her, very unlike the full confidence of his letters to her about another idea in the past. This hint is conveyed in that speech about "Duncan is in his grave", which critics have mistaken for genuine remorse, but which is really a feeler cunningly thrown out to find out how his wife takes this little new idea that he has hatched into a plan—all by himself, without a word about it to her—for a *second* murder; and this idea he hints to her under cover of a hypocritical remorse for his first murder. Her reply that the two victims he has named are "copy-holders" from Nature, the landlord, has been mistaken to mean that she understands his hint and gives her approval—"Well, murder them"; she does *not* mean that, but he thanks her effusively as if she means that, thus making her an accomplice in this second "business", inspite of herself, without her knowledge and consent, as she had been a willing accomplice, with full knowledge, in the first. She cannot be made even an accessory, after the fact; for the "fact" here is the plan of the murder, and that plan had been already formed before he speaks to her, and she knows nothing about it when he speaks. At this meeting there is a complete reversal of the relation between the two: the idea of both murders sprang out of his brains alone, but, in the first, she laid the plan, he carried it out; in this second, he plans, he carries out, and she is assigned a very subordinate place—she is to smile graciously on Banquo and make much of him at the banquet, though he does not tell her why she is to do so, and knows that she will not have occasion to do so. What is this but trifling with her? In the first, his admiration of her made her fit, in his eyes, to be the mother of heroes ("bear men children only"), and the depository of his secretest

## INTRODUCTION

lix

thoughts and his fullest confidence; in this second, she is treated like a child, is petted like one ("my dearest 'chuck'"), but is not to be taken seriously into his confidence; to her alarmed question "What's to be done?" his reply is "Don't ask; you will know in good time, and then it will be a pleasant surprise for you." Melodramatic criticism has mistaken his hypocritical "dear wife", and his daddy-like, patronizing "chickabiddy" to be proofs of his infatuated love for a "beautiful fiend", who takes advantage of it to take him by the nose, and mislead or drag this man of "noble, loving nature" to his destruction.

At the banquet she presides with the gracious dignity of a queen, with ready tact gives a plausible explanation of the king's strange behaviour, has to divide her attentions between him and the company—chiding him in a low voice, reassuring the guests aloud—until she has to dismiss them, when she sees the drift of his ravings, and sees that the guests see it too; for she and they both silently infer "murder" from them, and also *whose* murder it is. When she is left alone with him, the strain upon her nerves—weakened ever since that first murder—makes her collapse, not into a faint, but into utter listlessness; sitting limp and huddled up, she pays no heed to his talk; and *that* talk, within an hour or two of the second murder, is about energetic action that must be taken towards compassing a *third* murder—to be undertaken "for his own good"—and this, within an hour of the terror that the ghost of his last victim had thrown him into. The one thing constant about Macbeth is the growth of his murderous activity; the one thing constant about Lady Macbeth is the growth of her remorse; ambition, common to both, imperious will in one, hesitancy in the other, are variable or vanishing quantities; mutual confidence ends to give place to mutual indifference; the wife becomes the unconscious accuser of her husband, whose accomplice she had been; the husband looks upon the death of his wife as the death of one more fool in this world of fools; and the deaths of both are deaths in despair. In this third contemplated enterprise, Macbeth advances while his wife recedes, each farther than before. At the first murder he feared and hesitated; at the second he feared, and therefore did not hesitate to remove the cause of fear; at the third he neither fears nor hesitates, blames himself for doing so before, explains it as being due to his being yet



"young" in his art, an apprentice in it, and now resolves to act with the hand of a master-artist; he who once had raved about a voice saying "Macbeth shall sleep no more", means now, after a good sleep this night, to set about it early next morning. In the execution of this masterpiece in the art of murder, Lady Macbeth is not asked to have a share, not even a subordinate one; if she had been asked, she could not have taken one; for, while the murder of the Macduffs is being planned and carried out by him, in consultation with the witches, now his trusty privy-councillors, the drifting apart of the husband and wife has widened and widened, and now there is between them a deep gulf of separation of mind from mind; she has, like a derelict bull, drifted into a state of solitary despondency, while he is merrily making way, oar and sail, towards his third port of destination. When, in "valiant fury", he takes the field for the last time, she has passed from that state into one of sleep-walking and sleep-talking; the curse of "sleep no more" has fallen, not on him, but on her, for this abnormal state in which the senses are awake during sleep is real sleeplessness; it makes little difference whether she kills herself, or dies from the nervous exhaustion brought about by this dreadful condition of wakefulness, night and day. While she is in this state, the events of the past come back to her diseased mind; but what different feelings now does their recollection arouse! Then, she had invoked night and darkness and the smoke of hell to come to her aid; now, she dreads their approach, and has lights ever burning by her to keep them off, and even then she sees with dread the murkiness of hell; then, a little water was enough to wash the blood off her hands; now, night after night she washes them, but she cannot remove the spots and the smell of that blood; the stain of that blood will lie on her hand, as the stain of guilt has lain on her conscience, till death has closed her eyes to that accusing drop, and her inward ear to that accusing voice. In incoherent snatches of speaking, she who had *then* been his accomplice, *now* becomes the chief witness against her husband's first great crime, and the accuser of herself as an accomplice in it; but divine mercy, that is not withheld from her guilty soul, makes her *unconscious*, both as accusing witness and as self-accuser. Years have elapsed (events in the play march with breathless rapidity, but there are two gaps of time that

## INTRODUCTION

lxii

(cannot be definitely filled up) between the deed of that night and the recollection of it on this night, during which, while Macbeth has been, without a stop, wading across the river of Scotland's blood shed by him and his agents, Lady Macbeth has been brooding over the events of that night, till the smouldering fires of an inward hell that brooding has lit, now burst out into the flames of somnambulism and madness; but no words ever rise to her lips during the long-drawn tortures of remorse, even in the last moments of her life, to show repentance. Merciful Heaven long had left open the door to repentance, but she never entered it; did Heaven, in mercy still, send madness upon her to deaden those tortures before death, and to enable her to plead the plea of insanity before the judgment-seat, after?

After her death, Malcolm calls her "fiend-like"; but he who speaks it is a son in whose father's murder she had helped, and knows nothing as yet of her state of mind, when he speaks. We, who have just seen it, can be more dispassionate judges, and can correct this one-sided judgment, by placing by it the other side, namely, Lady Macbeth was woman-like, was a bad woman, but not a fiend. Medea, who killed her children outright, and dismembered her brother limb by limb, was a fiend. Lady Macbeth only said she would, to keep an oath, slay her child, but added the most human-like, most woman-like, most unfiendlike words—"I have given suck, and know how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me." Oedipus was made a fiend by Fate, when he killed his father, and in history fiendish sons and daughters have killed their fathers; Lady Macbeth only said she would kill Duncan, and then she could not kill him because "he resembled my father as he slept". She revealed even a true woman's weak point when she said "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand"; and she was a woman when from her sorely charged woman's breast there broke out that sigh "Oh! Oh! Oh!". In her ambition she was a bad woman; in her sufferings for it, she underwent the punishment a bad woman deserved.

**Lady Macduff**

A murderous woman and a murdered woman—in this, Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff are placed by their fates at opposite poles;

and in their characters also they stand poles apart—the one, a partner in the madness of ambition, the other, a wife in the strength of love; the one, deep in the confidence of her husband in the compassing of crime, the other, sharing with hers the sweet happiness of hearth and home; the one, childless and with a mother's love lying barren within her, the other, surrounded by little ones, on whom she could pour forth the wealth of a mother's love. It is this happy home, which his own married life has never known, that Macbeth breaks into, and this happy family whose lives he swoops down upon. To such a wife and mother, her husband's flight, without a word of farewell, has and can have but one meaning—"he loves us not, for if he did, he would not leave us thus". She had heard that the king had marked down her husband as a traitor; she knows nothing that he has done or said that could prove him to be one; with playful irony she tells the child that his father *was* a traitor, for with him she could not be serious; but within herself she bitterly feels that an innocent man should have behaved like a traitor, should have run away, when he should have stood firm on his innocence and proved it; this is why with a smile that conceals this bitterness, she gives that reply to her little son's question. The queen has many round her who serve her with fear—none, with love; the lady of Castle-Fife is loved by many who know her goodness, and by strangers who have heard of it; and it is one of these that comes to warn her, at the risk of his own life. Was there any one in Scotland who would have warned the queen, if she needed warning?

## V

**The Witches**

A widespread disease of vision in criticism sees much glory in things, when presented to it in the lime-light of the stage, that it knows very well will have no glory at all, if presented to it in the common light of real life or of sober sense. It sees in these witches high family ties with the aristocracy of demonology—such as the Nornæ Sisters of Scandinavian myths, or the Greek Sister Fates of Michael Angelo's painting, or the Sibyls of Roman mythology. It.



## INTRODUCTION

lxiii

scornfully frowns upon claims of relationship with them advanced on behalf of the vulgar witches of Middleton's travesty of this play, or of the broomstick witches of nursery tales, or of the Three Witches of "King James's golden days" in the Ingoldsby Legends, or of Cutty Sark and her sisters of Tam O' Shanter's days. And the pens of criticism are drawn across those scenes in this play, where any such vulgarity appears, as being "un-Shakespearian" &c. Let us follow our three witches through the play, and I predict that they will turn out to be both real witches and unreal witches; we shall see that they are both wretched old women, who in good King James's golden days were called witches and burnt or drowned, and creatures of a poet's imagination—that they are both ridiculous and sublime, both contemptible and terrible, both disgusting and awe-inspiring.

We first meet them *after* they have performed an incantation that has lent their supernatural aid to Macbeth's own valiant arm, in a battle now going on; they utter an enigma about "foul and fair", and make us feel curious to know its solution; they fill us with uneasy fears of what their power can be and can do. Not long after, we meet them again, waiting for Macbeth, returning victorious; and while they are waiting, we hear their gossip that fills us with disgust at the lives they lead. Then, we feared they were mighty powers of evil, agents of hell, controlling human destiny; now, we see them as old, ugly, bearded, half-starved, malicious witches, such as any village could supply from among its old women, using the power for which they have sold their souls to the devil, to work mischief through sheer wantonness, or for the satisfaction of petty vindictiveness. When they meet Macbeth and Banquo, we see their power shown in another light—that of prophecy; they predict their futures to the two men; the predictions have different effects on them; the one at once calls them the devil's agents, and treats their prediction about him with contemptuous incredulity; the other, at once too, feels his heart beating high at that about him, in serious response to it, and itself suggesting what the prediction never suggested, namely, the means for fulfilling it; the witches hold forth an end before his eyes—a crown; his inborn evil nature points to the means—murder; the two evil natures—the supernatural and the human—understand their kinship at their very first meeting; their joint work—of perverting good into



.evil, and evil into good—begins, and with it begins the solution of that enigma about "foul and fair".

In the Dagger Scene we feel the invisible working of the baneful power of the witches, and have proof of it in Macbeth's words "Witchcraft celebrates pale Hecate's offerings". Since they vanished from his eyes on that heath, they have invisibly followed him, watched the workings of his mind, known the plan he has laid, heard him hesitate to carry it out; and to keep him to his resolve they have celebrated another of their incantations, which sends that visionary dagger to draw him on to the deed. Critics who see in this dagger only the creation of an overheated imagination, make the mistake of taking this vision out of the province of poetry into that of psychology; they would be right if this vision was *not* in a drama; but in this drama, this dagger is a supernatural emissary, sent by the sorcery of witches, and not the abnormal product of the workings of a heated human brain.

The ghost of Banquo appears to Macbeth alone; no one in that large assembly of guests, nor the hostess herself, sees it; therefore, it is argued again, neither is this ghost a ghost at all, but the product of Macbeth's guilty conscience, working upon an overheated imagination; and again it is argued wrong. If there are such things as ghosts, why cannot a ghost show itself or not show itself to whom it pleases? And what business has psychology to take this question up, if it denies the existence of ghosts? Poetry can take it up, and go further:—the witches, on the first occasion, sent the vision of the dagger to lure Macbeth on; they now, on this second occasion, send the ghost (witches have necromantic powers, by all that is authentic in demonology, and can call forth the dead from their graves), to terrify him for having done what they had not lured him to; as a cat plays with a mouse before killing it, so the witches play with Macbeth before they kill him; and what is play to cat and witch, is torment to mouse and Macbeth.

These supernatural transactions—from the first incantation, that ensured the result of the battle, to the ghost scene—have been carried on by these witches without due authorization from their queen, and have thus infringed some infernal law, that we, on earth, cannot clearly understand; and so they have angered their queen, who sharply



reprimands them, receives their silent submission, and orders them to set about preparing the preliminaries of the grand *seance* at which their queen herself is to preside—of the Black Mass which she, as High Priestess of the religion of the Devil, means to celebrate. The details of these preparations are very nauseous; and for this very reason, they are all of Shakespeare's own writing—they faithfully set forth the orthodox rites of devil-worship. Loathsome are the preliminaries, but most enigmatic are the predictions, most awe-inspiring the visions that follow; the predictions fill Macbeth with a sense of security (to be afterwards falsified), and the visions with disappointment. The apparition of his own head tells him, without his recognizing it to be his, to beware of him who is destined to cut it off; the apparition of a child "not born of woman" tells him that none born of woman will have power to harm him, without his suspecting that this apparent impossibility will turn out to be a real possibility; the apparition of Duncan's young son, who is destined to defeat him, tells him that he will never be defeated till another impossibility comes to be realized—a whole forest of trees walking up to his castle walls. In all these three cases, Macbeth eagerly grasps at the security, and is miserably blind to its falseness. Thus falsely assured of the full natural term of life and of a peaceful death-bed for himself, he asks to be shown more; he is warned; he, nevertheless, insists; and so, to grieve his heart, he is shown the vision of the long line of Banquo's issue, destined to rule over Scotland, with Banquo himself closing the line, smiling at the happy fulfilment of the prediction made for him. Having thus embittered for him what he took to be the cup of sweet security, the witches take formal leave of Macbeth, with mock homage, as of so-called loyal subjects, and with a dance of triumph round him, as of entrappers surrounding the entrapped, who has been caught by them, to be made a subject of their own true king, the Devil.

Macbeth's own brains had conceived the ideas of the murders of both Duncan and Banquo; the witches had lured him on to the first murder; they held their hand and let him carry out the second, all by himself, and then showed their hand by terrifying him for having carried it out. What did they do in the case of his third great murder? To the eternal honour of the witches, let it ever be remem-



bered that they had neither art nor part in the murder of the Macduffs. The laws and the ethics of the infernal world drew a line, where Macbeth's drew none; that line was at *the murder of the innocent*; at which line, the conscience of the Devil himself stuck, and would not let him do what Macbeth did. Nay more: the devil's queen, herself a woman—for there must be sex and the feelings of sex in hell—avenged this murder of a woman and children on earth: with her supernatural aid she helped the natural affection that nerved the avenging arm of a husband and father; and this aid she lent by inspiring Macbeth with a false sense of security against Macduff, through the second of the predictions that she uttered through her acolytes, the witches. And yet there are critics who think that Hecate is useless, is not wanted in the play, is an interpolation, only spoils Shakespeare's poetry with her doggerel! After Macduff had sent Macbeth out of this world as too bad for it, was it with a feeling of pride or with a feeling of shame that the Devil received Macbeth into his kingdom as a subject?

## VI

### Quot Homines Tot Sententiae

"As many men, so many opinions," whether the opinions are in literary criticism or on real life. I have drawn these characters as above: in some opinions there given, I agree with, in others I differ from, other critics. Some of these points, of difference and of agreement, I give below, leaving the reader to form his own opinion.

*Macbeth*. "His natural disposition is not bad"; "his distress arises from a real sense of religion"; "he shows symptoms of a feeble mind"; and "of imbecility"; "vilifying imputations are laid on his nature"; Shakespeare "never utters a syllable against his known character of intrepidity"; "the valour of the tyrant invariably commands the admiration of every spectator of the play"; "the delight we receive from the estimation of his courage"; "but for Lady Macbeth, he would have been sensible enough not to murder Duncan"; nothing but her "potency of charms could have fascinated a hero, so dauntless, so amiable, so honourable, as Macbeth"; "his moral nature is so deeply moved that he loses all self-control after Duncan's



## INTRODUCTION

lxvii

murder"; but soon after "his thoughts flow as fast as ever, and he brilliantly utilizes them", in making an excuse for the deed that "is admirable and perfect". After Banquo's ghost vanishes, "most noticeable is the rapidity with which he recovers from his intense emotion, and the purely intellectual character of his remarks"; "he is a perfect type of the man of action, but lacked the inner cultivation", which makes him "rest his hopes of salvation on a witch's apparition"; "his practical genius cannot bear the suspense of a single moment, and he cannot restrain himself from slaying the grooms"; "he dares not entrust the secret" (of his plan to murder Banquo) "to the sounder judgment of his wife"; Shakespeare "intended the ghost of Banquo as an illusion of Macbeth's imagination", as shown "by a simple test, namely, that the spectre is invisible to all except Macbeth".

It is a relief to turn from this, and the like, to the following:—"Macbeth was a poet with his brain, and a villain with his heart"; "all through the play his blackest deeds are heralded by high thoughts, told in the most glorious word-painting, so that after a little we come to understand that the excellence of the poetic thought is but a suggestion of the measure of the wickedness that is to follow"; "a poetic mind supreme in the power of words, with vivid imagination and quick sympathy of intellect; a villain, cold-blooded, selfish, and remorseless, with a true villain's nerve and callousness when braced to evil work, and the physical heroism of those who are born to kill; a moral nature with only sufficient weakness to quake momentarily before superstitious terrors". "To the moralist Macbeth's guilt is so dark that its degree cannot be estimated, for there are no shades of black; but to the mental physiologist, to whom nerve rather than conscience, the function of the brain rather than the power of the will, is an object of study, it is impossible to omit from calculation the influences of the supernatural."

## VII

### Criticism

One aspect of the criticism of Shakespeare texts is most noticeable in *Macbeth*: it is the *rejection* of passages on the ground that they



do not come from the hand of Shakespeare. These rejections have been noticed above under the heading of *Action*, and will be noticed further in the Notes. To all of them the following general remarks apply. The work of destructive Shakespeare criticism has long been active, and has often been sound and sane, when it has led to constructive restoration, that readers have felt to be a true reading, replacing a corrupt one. But it has been sometimes unsound, and of late has been insane. That blessed word "un-Shakespearian" has been a very Durindana in the hands of mad-Orlando critics, with which they have slashed away at whole scenes and passages in Shakespeare. Such feats have called forth rebuke from a great living statesman and thinker, who gravely points out that if what these critics call "bad work" in the plays that pass under his name, is not Shakespeare's, but the work of other hands among his contemporaries, then it follows, with as good or as bad reason, that what they call "good work" in the plays of these contemporaries, is not from their hands but from Shakespeare's; and they call forth ridicule. Don't we remember how, as little ones, we used to make serious make-believe of reading a book, and pretend to understand it, and then, in very real delight in destructiveness, tear up its pages? The serious pedantry, miscalled Shakespeare criticism, under which some of us conceal this real love of destructiveness, is a survival into mature years of this childish destructiveness. It is time that it should cease; similar extravagances of older dates have had their time and ceased: Shakespeare travesties, Shakespeare forgeries, imaginary secret Shakespeare collaborations, Collier emendations, Baconian theories, and, latest, the blackening of innocent Shakespeare characters—all have come and gone. These imaginary un-Shakespearisms are not the sober criticisms of a healthy frame of mind; they are barren displays of ingenuity, acrobatic feats, posture-makings, contortions, pyrotechnic displays, in criticism; they are murders of thousands of good Shakespeare words, as Macbeth's were of thousands of human beings in a play; which is the worse murderer—such criticism of a play, or such a hero of one?

Sober criticism, however, makes one mistake in saying that there is no *comic element* in this play, that it is overspread with darkness, lurid with crime and bloodshed. There is much comedy in this play:—in the Porter scene, in the Ross and Old Man scene, in the Boiling

## INTRODUCTION

Ixix

Cauldron scene, in the Sergeant's Narrative scene, in Macbeth's plan for preventing ghosts from haunting us, in Macduff's liberal allowances of vice to Malcolm, in the farewell of the witches to Macbeth.

I would particularly draw the Reader's attention to the following references to the *Notes*, as dealing with points on which critics have differed much :—

ACT I, SCENES : ii, 21, 22; iii, 1-28; iii, 112-114; v, 17; v, 23-25; v, 40-54; vi, 1-3; vii, 31-35; vii, 51-59.

ACT II, SCENES : i, 25-28; ii, 40; iii, 98-100.

ACT III, SCENES : i, 48-72; i, 130; ii, 44-53; iii, 31-39; iv, 73-83; iv, 128-138; v, 37; vi, 12; vi, 24-39; vi, 44-47.

ACT IV, SCENES : i, 1-47; i, 63; i, 84; i, 98-104; i, 132; i, 140-155; ii, 16-22; ii, 19-22; ii, 21, 22; ii, 63-71; ii, 140-159; ii, 215; ii, 233-234, 238.

ACT V, SCENES : i, 38; i, 48, 53; ii, 1, 2; ii, 4, 5; ii, 8; ii, 15, 16; iii (general); iii, 21; v, 17-28; vii, 21, 22; vii, 30-35; vii, 63.



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

DUNCAN, King of Scotland

MALCOLM } his sons  
DONALBAIN }

MACBETH }  
BANQUO } generals of the King's army

MACDUFF }  
LENNOX }

ROSS }  
MENTEITH }

ANGUS } noblemen of Scotland  
CAITHNESS }

FLEANCE, son to Banquo

SIWARD, Earl of Northumberland, General of the English forces

Young SIWARD, his son

SEYTON, an officer attending on Macbeth

Boy, son to Macduff

An English Doctor

A Scotch Doctor

A Sergeant

A Porter

An Old Man

LADY MACBETH

LADY MACDUFF

Gentlewoman attending on Lady Macbeth

Lords, Gentlemen, Officers, Soldiers, Murderers, Attendants and  
Messengers

Hecate

Three Witches

Apparitions

SCENE : *Scotland; England.*



# MACBETH

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## ACT I

SCENE I. *A desert place. Thunder and Lightning*

*Enter three WITCHES*

*First Witch.* When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

*Sec. Witch.* When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.

*Third Witch.* That will be ere the set of sun.

*First Witch.* Where the place?

*Sec. Witch.* Upon the heath.

*Third Witch.* There to meet with Macbeth.

*First Witch.* I come, Graymalkin.

*Sec. Witch.* Paddock calls.

*Third Witch.* Anon.

*All.* Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

10

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *A camp near Forres*

*Alarum within. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM,  
DONALBAIN, LENNOX, with Attendants,  
meeting a bleeding SERGEANT*

*Dun.* What bloody man is that? He can report,  
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt  
The newest state.

*Mal.* This is the sergeant,  
Who, like a good and hardy soldier, fought  
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!  
Say to the king the knowledge of the broil  
As thou didst leave it.

*Ser.* Doubtful it stood;  
As two spent swimmers, that do cling together  
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—  
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that 10  
The multiplying villanies of nature  
Do swarm upon him—from the western isles  
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;  
And Fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,  
Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak;  
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—  
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel  
Which smok'd with bloody execution,  
Like Valour's minion carv'd out his passage  
Till he fac'd the slave; 20  
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,  
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,  
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

*Dun.* O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!



Scene 2]

MACBETH

3

*Ser.* As whence the sun 'gins his reflection  
Shipwracking storms and direful thunders break,  
So from that spring whence comfort seem'd to  
come

Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark :  
No sooner justice had, with valour arm'd,  
Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels, 30  
But the Norwegian lord, surveying vantage,  
With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men,  
Began a fresh assault.

*Dun.* Dismay'd not this  
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo ?

*Ser.* Yes ;  
As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.  
If I say sooth, I must report they were  
As cannons overcharg'd with double cracks ;  
So they  
Doubly redoubl'd strokes upon the foe :  
Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds, 40  
Or memorize another Golgotha,  
I cannot tell —  
But I am faint ; my gashes cry for help.

*Dun.* So well thy words become thee as thy  
wounds ;  
They smack of honour both. Go, get him surgeons.  
[Exit Sergeant, attended.

Who comes here ?

Enter Ross

*Mal.* The worthy thane of Ross.

*Len.* What a haste looks through his eyes ! So  
should he look  
That seems to speak things strange.



*Ross.* God save the king!

*Dun.* Whence cam'st thou, worthy thane?

*Ross.* From Fife, great king;

Where the Norwegian banners flout the sky 50

And fan our people cold. Norway himself

With terrible numbers,

Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,

The Thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict;

Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,

Confronted him with self-comparisons,

Point against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm,

Curbing his lavish spirit: and, to conclude,

The victory fell on us;—

*Dun.* Great happiness!

*Ross.* That now

Sweno, the Norway's king, craves composition; 60

Nor would we deign him burial of his men

Till he disbursed at Saint Colme's Inch

Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

*Dun.* No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive  
Our bosom interest. Go pronounce his present death,  
And with his former title greet Macbeth. 66

*Ross.* I'll see it done.

*Dun.* What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.

[*Exeunt.*]

### SCENE III. *A heath*

*Thunder.* Enter the three WITCHES

*First Witch.* Where hast thou been, sister?

*Sec. Witch.* Killing swine.

*Third Witch.* Sister, where thou?

Scene 3]

## MACBETH

5

*First Witch.* A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,  
And munch'd, and munch'd, and munch'd:—  
'Give me,' quoth I:  
'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump-fed ronyon cries.  
Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger;  
But in a sieve I 'll thither sail,  
And, like a rat without a tail,  
I 'll do, I 'll do, and I 'll do. 10

*Sec. Witch.* I 'll give thee a wind.

*First Witch.* Thou 'rt kind.

*Third Witch.* And I another.

*First Witch.* I myself have all the other;

And the very ports they blow,  
All the quarters that they know  
I' the shipman's card.

I'll drain him dry as hay:

Sleep shall neither night nor day

Hang upon his pent-house lid; 20

He shall live a man forbid.

Weary se'nnights nine times nine

Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine:

Though his bark cannot be lost,

Yet it shall be tempest-tost.

Look what I have.

*Sec. Witch.* Show me, show me.

*First Witch.* Here I have a pilot's thumb,  
Wrack'd as homeward he did come. [Drum within.]

*Third Witch.* A drum! a drum! 30

Macbeth doth come.

*All.* The weird sisters, hand in hand,  
Posters of the sea and land,  
Thus do go about, about:  
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,



And thrice again, to make up nine.  
Peace! the charm's wound up.

*Enter MACBETH and BANQUO*

*Macb.* So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

*Ban.* How far is 't call'd to Forres? What are these

So wither'd, and so wild in their attire, 40  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on 't? Live you? or are you aught  
That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her choppy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.

*Macb.* Speak, if you can: what are you?

*First Witch.* All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee  
Thane of Glamis!

*Sec. Witch.* All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee,  
Thane of Cawdor!

*Third Witch.* All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be  
king hereafter! 50

*Ban.* Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner  
You greet with present grace and great prediction  
Of noble having and of royal hope,  
That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not.  
If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear 60  
Your favours nor your hate.

Scene 3]

## MACBETH

7

*First Witch.* Hail!*Sec. Witch.* Hail!*Third Witch.* Hail!*First Witch.* Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.*Sec. Witch.* Not so happy, yet much happier.*Third Witch.* Thou shalt get kings, though thou  
be none:

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

*First Witch.* Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!*Macb.* Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:  
By Sinel's death I know I am Thane of Glamis; 71  
But how of Cawdor? the Thane of Cawdor lives,  
A prosperous gentleman; and to be king  
Stands not within the prospect of belief,  
No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence  
You owe this strange intelligence? or why  
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way  
With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge  
you. [Witches vanish.]*Ban.* The earth hath bubbles as the water has,  
And these are of them —whither are they vanish'd? 80*Macb.* Into the air; and what seem'd corporal  
Melted as breath into the wind!*Ban.* Would they had stay'd!*Ban.* Were such things here as we do speak  
about?Or have we eaten on the insane root  
That takes the reason prisoner!*Macb.* Your children shall be kings.*Ban.* You shall be king.*Macb.* And Thane of Cawdor too: went it not so?*Ban.* To the selfsame tune and words. Who 's  
here?

*Enter Ross and Angus*

*Ross.* The king hath happily receiv'd, Macbeth, 90  
The news of thy success: and when he reads  
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,  
His wonders and his praises do contend  
Which should be thine or his: silenced with that,  
In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,  
He finds thee in the stout Norwegian ranks,  
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,  
Strange images of death. As thick as hail  
Came post with post, and every one did bear  
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence, 100  
And pour'd them down before him.

*Ang.* We are sent  
To give thee, from our royal master, thanks;  
Only to herald thee into his sight,  
Not pay thee.

*Ross.* And for an earnest of a greater honour,  
He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor;  
In which addition, hail, most worthy thane!  
For it is thine.

*Ban.* What! can the devil speak true?

*Macb.* The Thane of Cawdor lives: why do you  
dress me  
In borrow'd robes?

*Ang.* Who was the thane lives yet, 110  
But under heavy judgement bears that life  
Which he deserves to lose. Whether he was combin'd  
With those of Norway, or did line the rebel  
With hidden help and vantage, or that with both  
He labour'd in his country's wrack, I know not;  
But treasons capital, confess'd and prov'd,  
Have overthrown him.

Scene 3]

## MACBETH

97

Macb. [Aside] Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor!  
The greatest is behind. [To Ross and Angus]  
Thanks for your pains.  
[To Banquo] Do you not hope your children  
shall be kings,  
When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me 120  
Promis'd no less to them?

Ban. That, trusted home,  
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown.  
Besides the Thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange:  
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's  
In deepest consequence.  
Cousins, a word, I pray you.

Macb. [Aside] Two truths are told,  
As happy prologues to the swelling act  
Of the imperial theme.—I thank you, gentlemen— 130  
[Aside] This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill; cannot be good: if ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs.  
Against the use of nature? Present fears  
Are less than horrible imaginings:  
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical, 140  
Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is  
But what is not.

Ban. Look, how our partner's rapt.

Macb. [Aside] If chance will have me king, why,—  
chance may crown me,



Without my stir.

*Ban.* New honours come upon him,  
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould  
But with the aid of use.

*Macb.* [Aside] Come what come may,  
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

*Ban.* Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

*Macb.* Give me your favour: my dull brain was  
wrought

With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains  
Are register'd where every day I turn  
The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.

[To Banquo] Think upon what hath chanc'd, and at  
more time,

The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak  
Our free hearts each to other.

*Ban.* Very gladly.

*Macb.* Till then, enough. Come, friends. [*Exeunt*.]

SCENE IV. *Forres. The palace*

*Flourish.* Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN,  
LENNOX, and Attendants

*Dun.* Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not  
Those in commission yet return'd?

*Mal.* My liege,  
They are not yet come back. But I have spoke  
With one that saw him die, who did report  
That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,  
Implor'd your highness' pardon and set forth  
A deep repentance. Nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it; he died



Scene 4]

MACBETH

11

As one that had been studied in his death,  
To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd      10  
As 'twere a careless trifle.

Dun.                          There's no art

To find the mind's construction in the face:  
He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust.

*Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS*

O worthiest cousin!

The sin of my ingratitude even now  
Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before  
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow  
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserv'd,  
That the proportion both of thanks and payment  
Might have been mine! only I have left to say,    20  
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

Macb. The service and the loyalty I owe,  
In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part  
Is to receive our duties: and our duties  
Are to your throne and state, children and servants;  
Which do but what they should, by doing every-  
thing

Safe toward your love and honour.

Dun.                          Welcome hither:  
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour  
To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,  
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known    30  
No less to have done so: let me infold thee  
And hold thee to my heart.

Ban.                          There if I grow,  
The harvest is your own.



*Dun.* My plenteous joys,  
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves  
In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,  
And you whose places are the nearest, know,  
We will establish our estate upon  
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter  
The Prince of Cumberland; which honour must  
Not unaccompanied invest him only, 40  
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine  
On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,  
And bind us further to you.

*Macb.* The rest is labour, which is not us'd for you.  
I 'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful  
The hearing of my wife with your approach;  
So, humbly take my leave.

*Dun.* My worthy Cawdor!

*Macb. [Aside]* The Prince of Cumberland! that  
is a step

On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires! 50  
Let not light see my black and deep desires:  
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. [Exit.]

*Dun.* True, worthy Banquo; he is full so  
valiant,  
And in his commendations I am fed; 55  
It is a banquet to me. Let 's after him,  
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome:  
It is a peerless kinsman. [Flourish. Exeunt.]

SCENE V. *Inverness. Macbeth's castle*

*Enter LADY MACBETH, reading a letter*

Lady M. 'They met me in the day of success; and I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the king, who all-hailed me "Thane of Cawdor;" by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with "Hail, king that shalt be!" This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.'

15

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be  
What thou art promis'd: yet do I fear thy nature;  
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldest be great;  
Art not without ambition, but without 20  
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldest  
highly,

That wouldest thou holily; wouldest not play false,  
And yet wouldest wrongly win: thou 'ldst have,  
great Glamis,

That which cries 'Thus thou must do,' if thou have it;  
And that which rather thou dost fear to do  
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,

And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
To have thee crown'd withal.

30

*Enter a MESSENGER*

What is your tidings?

*Mess.* The king comes here to-night.

*Lady M.* Thou 'rt mad to say it..

Is not thy master with him? who, were 't so,  
Would have inform'd for preparation.

*Mess.* So please you, it is true: our thane is  
coming:

One of my fellows had the speed of him,  
Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more  
Than would make up his message.

*Lady M.* Give him tending;  
He brings great news. [Exit Messenger.]

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan 40.  
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts! unsex me here,  
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,  
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
That no compunctionous visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances 50.  
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,

Scene 5]

## MACBETH

15.

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry 'Hold, hold!'

*Enter MACBETH*

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!  
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!  
Thy letters have transported me beyond  
This ignorant present, and I feel now  
The future in the instant.

*Macb.* My dearest love,  
Duncan comes here to-night.

*Lady M.* And when goes hence?

*Macb.* To-morrow, as he purposes.

*Lady M.* O, never 61  
Shall sun that morrow see!  
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,  
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under 't. He that 's coming  
Must be provided for: and you shall put  
This night's great business into my dispatch;  
Which shall to all our nights and days to come 70  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

*Macb.* We will speak further.

*Lady M.* Only look up clear;  
To alter favour ever is to fear:  
Leave all the rest to me. 70  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI. *Before Macbeth's castle*

*Hautboys and torches.* Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM,  
DONALBAIN, BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF,  
ROSS, ANGUS, and Attendants

DUN. This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.

Ban. This guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve  
By his lov'd mansionry that the heaven's breath  
Smells wooingly here: no jutting, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird  
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd  
The air is delicate.

Enter LADY MACBETH

Dun. See, see, our honour'd hostess! 10  
The love that follows us something is our trouble,  
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you  
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains,  
And thank us for your trouble.

Lady M. All our service,  
In every point twice done, and then done double,  
Were poor and single business to contend  
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith  
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,  
And the late dignities heap'd up to them,  
We rest your hermits.

Dun. Where 's the Thane of Cawdor? 20  
We cours'd him at the heels, and had a purpose  
To be his purveyor: but he rides well,  
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him



Scene 7]

MACBETH

17

To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,  
We are your guest to-night.

Lady M. Your servants ever  
Have theirs, themselves, and what is theirs, in compt,  
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,  
Still to return your own.

Dun. Give me your hand;  
Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,  
And shall continue our graces towards him. 30  
By your leave, hostess. [Exeunt.]

SCENE VII. MACBETH'S Castle

Hautboys and torches. Enter a SEWER, and divers  
Servants with dishes and service, and pass  
over the stage. Then enter MACBETH

Macb. If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere  
well

It were done quickly: if the assassination  
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,  
With his surcease, success; that but this blow  
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,  
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases  
We still have judgement here; that we but teach  
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return  
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice 10  
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips. He's here in double trust.  
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
Who should against his murderer shut the door,



Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels trumpet-tongu'd against  
The deep damnation of his taking-off; 20  
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd  
Upon the slightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on the other—

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

How now! what news?

*Lady M.* He has almost supp'd: why have you  
left the chamber? 29

*Macb.* Hath he ask'd for me?

*Lady M.* Know you not he has?

*Macb.* We will proceed no further in this business:  
He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,  
Not cast aside so soon.

*Lady M.* Was the hope drunk  
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since,  
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale  
At what it did so freely? From this time  
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard  
To be the same in thine own act and valour 40  
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that  
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,





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20

MACBETH

[Act II

*Macb.* Bring forth men-children only;  
For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males. Will it not be receiv'd,  
When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber, and us'd their very daggers,  
That they have done 't?

*Lady M.* Who dares receive it other,  
As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar  
Upon his death?

*Macb.* I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. 80  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show:  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

[*Exeunt.*

## ACT II

SCENE I. *Inverness. Court of MACBETH'S Castle*

*Enter BANquo, and FLEANCE with a torch before him*

*Ban.* How goes the night, boy?

*Fle.* The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.

*Ban.* And she goes down at twelve.

*Fle.* I take 't, 'tis later, sir.

*Ban.* Hold, take my sword. There 's husbandry  
in heaven,

Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,  
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!

Scene 1]

MACBETH

21

*Enter MACBETH, and a Servant with a torch.*  
Give me my sword.

Who's there?

10

*Macb.* A friend.*Ban.* What, sir! not yet at rest? The king's  
a-bed:

He hath been in unusual pleasure, and  
Sent forth great largess to your offices:  
This diamond he greets your wife withal,  
By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up  
In measureless content.

*Macb.* Being unprepar'd,

Our will became the servant to defect,  
Which else should free have wrought.

All's well.

*Ban.* I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters: 20  
To you they have show'd some truth.*Macb.* I think not of them.  
Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,  
We would spend it in some words upon that business,  
If you would grant the time.*Ban.* At your kind'st leisure.*Macb.* If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,  
It shall make honour for you.*Ban.* So I lose none  
In seeking to augment it, but still keep  
My bosom franchis'd and allegiance clear,  
I shall be counsell'd.*Macb.* Good repose the while!*Ban.* Thanks, sir: the like to you. 30[*Exeunt BANQUO and FLEANCE.**Macb.* Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready  
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.[*Exit Servant.*

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch  
thee.

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
I see thee yet, in form as palpable      40  
As this which now I draw.

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;  
And such an instrument I was to use.  
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,  
Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still;  
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
Which was not so before. There 's no such thing:  
It is the bloody business which informs

Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse      50  
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings: and wither'd Murder,  
'Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,

Whose howl 's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,  
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,  
And take the present horror from the time,      59  
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:  
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

[A bell rings.]

I go, and it is done: the bell invites me.  
Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven, or to hell.

[Exit.]

SCENE II. *The Same*

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

*Lady M.* That which hath made them drunk hath  
made me bold;  
What hath quench'd them hath given me fire. Hark!  
Peace!

It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,  
Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it:  
The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms  
Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd  
their possets,

That death and nature do contend about them.  
Whether they live or die.

*Macb. [Within]* Who 's there? what, ho!

*Lady M.* Alack, I am afraid they have awak'd 10  
And 'tis not done: the attempt and not the deed  
Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;  
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done 't. My husband!

*Enter MACBETH*

*Macb.* I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a  
noise?

*Lady M.* I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
Did not you speak?

*Macb.*

When?

*Lady M.*

Now.

*Macb.*

As I descended?

*Lady M.* Ay.

*Macb.* Hark!

Who lies i' the second chamber?



Lady M.

Donalbain. 20

Macb. [Looking on his hands.] This is a sorry sight.

Lady M. A foolish thought to say a sorry sight.

Macb. There 's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one  
cried 'Murder!'

That they did wake each other: I stood and heard  
them:

But they did say their prayers, and address'd them  
Again to sleep.

Lady M. There are two lodg'd together.

Macb. One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen'  
the other:

As they had seen me with these hangman's hands:  
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'

When they did say 'God bless us!' 30

Lady M. Consider it not so deeply.

Macb. But wherefore could not I pronounce  
'Amen'?

I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'  
Stuck in my throat.

Lady M. These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

Macb. Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no  
more!'

Macbeth does murder sleep,'—the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, 40  
Chief nourisher in life's feast,—

Lady M. What do you mean?

Macb. Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the  
house:

'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more: Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

*Lady M.* Who was it that thus cried? Why  
worthy thane,  
You do unbend your noble strength, to think  
So brainsickly of things. Go get some water.  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.  
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?  
They must lie there: go carry them, and smear 50  
The sleepy grooms with blood.

*Macb.* I 'll go no more:  
I am afraid to think what I have done;  
Look on 't again I dare not.

*Lady M.* Infirm of purpose!  
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead  
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,  
I 'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,  
For it must seem their guilt.

[Exit. Knocking within.

*Macb.* Whence is that knocking?  
How is 't with me, when every noise appals me? 59  
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes!  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

Re-enter LADY MACBETH

*Lady M.* My hands are of your colour, but I  
shame  
To wear a heart so white. [Knocking within.]  
I hear a knocking  
At the south entry: retire we to our chamber:  
A little water clears us of this deed:



How easy is it then! Your constancy

Hath left you unattended. [Knocking within.]

Hark! more knocking:

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us 71

And show us to be watchers: be not lost

So poorly in your thoughts.

Macb. To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself. [Knocking within.]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

[Exeunt.]

### SCENE III. *The Same*

Enter a Porter. Knocking within

Porter. Here 's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key. [Knocking within.] Knock, knock, knock! Who 's there, i' the name of Beelzebub? Here 's a farmer, that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty: come in time; have napkins enow about you; here you 'll sweat for 't. [Knocking within.] Knock, knock! Who 's there, i' the other devil's name? Faith, here 's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator. [Knocking within.] Knock, knock, knock! Who 's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose: come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose. [Knocking within.] Knock, knock; never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I 'll devil-porter it no further: I

Scene 3]

MACBETH

27

had thought to have let in some of all professions,  
that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.  
[Knocking within.] Anon, anon! I pray you,  
remember the porter. [Opens the gate.] 23

*Enter MACDUFF and LENNOX.*

*Macd.* Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,  
That you do lie so late?

*Port.* Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second  
cock.

*Macd.* Is thy master stirring?

*Enter MACBETH*

Our knocking has awak'd him; here he comes. 29

*Len.* Good morrow, noble sir.

*Macb.* Good morrow, both.

*Macd.* Is the king stirring, worthy thane?

*Macb.* Not yet.

*Macd.* He did command me to call timely on him:  
I have almost slipp'd the hour.

*Macb.* I 'll bring you to him.

*Macd.* I know this is a joyful trouble to you;  
But yet 'tis one.

*Macb.* The labour we delight in physics pain.  
This is the door.

*Macd.* I 'll make so bold to call,  
For 'tis my limited service. [Exit.

*Len.* Goes the king hence to-day?

*Macb.* He does: he did appoint so.

*Len.* The night has been unruly: where we lay, 40  
Our chimneys were blow'n down, and, as they say,  
Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death,



And prophesying with accents terrible  
Of dire combustion and confus'd events  
New hatch'd to the woful time: the obscure bird  
Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth  
Was feverous and did shake.

*Macb.* 'Twas a rough night.

*Len.* My young remembrance cannot parallel  
A fellow to it.

49

### *Re-enter MACDUFF*

*Macd.* O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart  
Cannot conceive nor name thee.

Macb. 1

What's the matter?

Len.

*Macd.* Confusion now hath made his masterpiece.  
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope  
The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence  
The life o' the building.

*Mach.* What is 't you say? the life?

*Len.* Mean you his majesty?

*Macd.* Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight.  
With a new Gorgon: do not bid me speak;  
See, and then speak yourselves.

[*Exeunt MACBETH and LENNOX.*

**Awake, awake !**

Ring the alarum-bell. Murder and treason !      60  
Banquo and Donalbain ! Malcolm ! awake !  
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit.  
And look on death itself ! up, up, and see  
The great doom's image ! Malcolm ! Banquo !  
As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,  
To countenance this horror ! Ring the bell.

### *[Bell rings..*



Scene 3]

MACBETH

29

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

*Lady M.* What 's the business.  
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley  
The sleepers of the house? speak, speak!

*Macd.* O gentle lady.  
'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak: 70  
The repetition, in a woman's ear,  
Would murder as it fell.

*Enter BANQUO*

O Banquo! Banquo!  
Our royal master 's murder'd.

*Lady M.* Woe, alas!  
What, in our house?  
*Ban.* Too cruel any where.  
Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,  
And say it is not so.

*Re-enter MACBETH and LENNOX, with ROSS*

*Macb.* Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had liv'd a blessed time; for from this instant  
There 's nothing serious in mortality:  
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead; 80  
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this vault to brag of.

*Enter MALCOLM and DONALBAIN*

*Don.* What is amiss?  
*Macb.* You are, and do not know 't:  
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood  
Is stopp'd; the very source of it is stopp'd.  
*Macd.* Your royal father 's murder'd.

*Mal.*

O! by whom?

*Len.* Those of his chamber, as it seem'd, had  
done 't:

Their hands and faces were all badg'd with blood;  
So were their daggers, which unwip'd we found  
Upon their pillows: 90  
They star'd, and were distracted; no man's life  
Was to be trusted with them.

*Macb.* O! yet I do repent me of my fury,  
That I did kill them.*Macd.* Wherefore did you so?*Macb.* Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate and  
furious,

Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:  
The expedition of my violent love  
Outran the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,  
His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood,  
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature 100  
For ruin's wasteful entrance: there, the murderers,  
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers  
Unmannerly breech'd with gore: who could refrain,  
That had a heart to love, and in that heart  
Courage, to make 's love known?

*Lady M.* Help me hence, ho!*Macd.* Look to the lady.*Mal.* [Aside to Don.] Why do we hold our tongues,  
That most may claim this argument for ours?*Don.* [Aside to Mal.] What should be spoken here,  
Where our fate, hid in an augur-hole,  
May rush, and seize us? Let 's away; our tears 110  
Are not yet brew'd.*Mal.* [Aside to Don.] Nor our strong sorrow  
Upon the foot of motion.

Scene 3]

## MACBETH

31..

Ban.

Look to the lady:

[LADY MACBETH is carried out..

And when we have our naked frailties hid,  
That suffer in exposure, let us meet,  
And question this most bloody piece of work,  
To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us:  
In the great hand of God I stand, and thence  
Against the undivulg'd pretence I fight  
Of treasonous malice.

Macd.

And so do I.

All.

So all.

Macb. Let 's briefly put on manly readiness, 120.  
And meet i' the hall together.

All.

Well contented.

[*Exeunt all but MALCOLM and DONALBAIN.*]

Mal. What will you do? Let 's not consort with  
them:

To show an unfelt sorrow is an office  
Which the false man does easy. I 'll to England.

Don. To Ireland, I; our separated fortune  
Shall keep us both the safer: where we are,  
There 's daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood,  
The nearer bloody.

Mal. This murderous shaft that 's shot  
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way  
Is to avoid the aim. Therefore to horse; 130.  
And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,  
But shift away: there 's warrant in that theft  
Which steals itself when there 's no mercy left.

[*Exeunt..*

SCENE IV. *Outside MACBETH'S Castle*

*Enter Ross and an Old Man*

*Old M.* Three score and ten I can remember well:  
Within the volume of which time I have seen  
Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore night  
Hath trifled former knowings.

*Ross.*

Ah, good father,

Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act,  
Threaten his bloody stage: by the clock 'tis day,  
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.  
Is 't night's predominance, or the day's shame,  
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,  
When living light should kiss it?

*Old M.*

'Tis unnatural,

Even like the deed that 's done. On Tuesday last  
A falcon towering in her pride of place 12  
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

*Ross.* And Duncan's horses—a thing most strange  
and certain—

Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,  
Contending 'gainst obedience as they would make  
War with mankind.

*Old M.* 'Tis said they eat each other.

*Ross.* They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes,  
That look'd upon 't. Here comes the good Macduff.

*Enter MACDUFF*

How goes the world, sir, now?

*Macd.*

Why, see you not?

*Ross.* Is 't known who did this more than bloody  
deed? 22

Scene 4]

## MACBETH

33

*Macd.* Those that Macbeth hath slain.

*Ross.* Alas, the day!

What good could they pretend?

*Macd.* They were suborn'd.

Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's two sons,  
Are stol'n away and fled, which puts upon them  
Suspicion of the deed.

*Ross.* 'Gainst nature still:

'Thriftless ambition, that wilt ravin up  
'Thine own life's means! Then 'tis most like  
The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

30

*Macd.* He is already nam'd, and gone to Scone  
To be invested.

*Ross.* Where is Duncan's body?

*Macd.* Carried to Colme-kill,  
The sacred storehouse of his predecessors  
And guardian of their bones.

*Ross.* Will you to Scone?

*Macd.* No, cousin, I 'll to Fife.

*Ross.* Well, I will thither.

*Macd.* Well, may you see things well done there.  
adieu!

Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

*Ross.* Farewell, father.

39

*Old M.* God's benison go with you, and with those  
That would make good of bad and friends of foes!

[*Exeunt.*



## ACT III

SCENE I. *Forres. The palace**Enter BANQUO*

*Ban.* Thou hast it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
As the weird women promis'd, and I fear  
Thou play'dst most foully for 't: yet it was said  
It should not stand in thy posterity,  
But that myself should be the root and father  
Of many kings. If there come truth from them—  
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—  
Why, by the verities on thee made good,  
May they not be my oracles as well,  
And set me up in hope? But, hush! no more. 10

*Sennet sounded.* Enter MACBETH, as king; LADY MACBETH, as queen; LENNOX, ROSS, Lords, Ladies, and Attendants

*Macb.* Here 's our chief guest.

*Lady M.* If he had been forgotten,  
It had been as a gap in our great feast,  
And all-thing unbecoming.

*Macb.* To-night we hold a solemn supper, sir,  
And I 'll request your presence.

*Ban.* Let your highness  
Command upon me, to the which my duties  
Are with a most indissoluble tie  
For ever knit.

*Macb.* Ride you this afternoon?

*Ban.* Ay, my good lord.

*Macb.* We should have else desir'd your good advice,  
Which still hath been both grave and prosperous,  
In this day's council; but we 'll take to-morrow.  
Is 't far you ride?

*Ban.* As far, my lord, as will fill up the time  
'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,  
I must become a borrower of the night  
For a dark hour or twain.

*Macb.* Fail not our feast.

*Ban.* My lord, I will not.

*Macb.* We hear our bloody cousins are bestow'd  
In England and in Ireland, not confessing  
Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers  
With strange invention: but of that to-morrow,  
When therewithal we shall have cause of state  
Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse: adieu,  
Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?

*Ban.* Ay, my good lord: our time does call upon 's.

*Macb.* I wish your horses swift and sure of foot  
And so I do commend you to their backs.

Farewell. [Exit Banquo.

Let every man be master of his time  
Till seven at night; to make society  
The sweeter welcome, we will keep ourself  
Till supper-time alone: while then, God be with you!

[*Exeunt all but Macbeth and an Attendant.*

Sirrah, a word with you: attend those men  
Our pleasure?

*Attend.* They are, my lord, without the palace-gate.

*Macb.* Bring them before us. [Exit Aettendant.

To be thus is nothing;  
But to be safely thus: our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature

Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares,  
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind, 51  
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
To act in safety. There is none but he  
Whose being I do fear: and under him  
My genius is rebuk'd, as it is said  
Mark Antony's was by Cæsar. He chid the sisters,  
When first they put the name of king upon me,  
And bade them speak to him; then, prophet-like,  
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:  
Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown 60  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;  
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
Only for them, and mine eternal jewel  
Given to the common enemy of man,  
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!  
Rather than so, come, Fate, into the list, 70  
And champion me to the utterance! Who 's there?

*Re-enter Attendant, with two Murderers*

Now go to the door, and stay there till we call.

[*Exit Attendant.*]

Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

*First Mur.* It was, so please your highness.

*Macb.* Well, then, now

Have you consider'd of my speeches? Know  
That it was he in the times past which held you  
So under fortune, which you thought had been  
Our innocent self: this I made good to you

Scene 1]

## MACBETH

In our last conference; pass'd in probation with you,  
How you were borne in hand, how cross'd, the  
instruments, 80  
Who wrought with them, and all things else that might  
To half a soul and to a notion craz'd  
Say, 'Thus did Banquo.'

*First Mur.* You made it known to us.

*Macb.* I did so; and went further, which is now  
Our point of second meeting. Do you find  
Your patience so predominant in your nature,  
That you can let this go? Are you so gospell'd  
To pray for this good man and for his issue,  
Whose heavy hand hath bow'd you to the grave  
And beggar'd yours for ever?

*First Mur.* We are men, my liege.

*Macb.* Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men; 91  
As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept  
All by the name of dogs: the valu'd file  
Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,  
The housekeeper, the hunter, every one  
According to the gift which bounteous nature  
Hath in him clos'd; whereby he does receive  
Particular addition, from the bill  
That writes them all alike: and so of men. 100  
Now if you have a station in the file,  
Not i' the worst rank of manhood, say it;  
And I will put that business in your bosoms,  
Whose execution takes your enemy off,  
Grapples you to the heart and love of us,  
Who wear our health but sickly in his life,  
Which in his death were perfect.

*Sec. Mur.* I am one, my liege,  
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world



Have so incens'd that I am reckless what  
I do to spite the world.

*First Mur.* And I another, 110  
So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,  
That I would set my life on any chance,  
To mend it or be rid on 't.

*Macb.* Both of you  
Know Banquo was your enemy.

*Both Mur.* True, my lord.

*Macb.* So is he mine, and in such bloody distance  
That every minute of his being thrusts  
Against my near'st of life: and though I could  
With barefac'd power sweep him from my sight  
And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,  
For certain friends that are both his and mine, 120  
Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall  
Who I myself struck down: and thence it is  
That I to your assistance do make love,  
Masking the business from the common eye  
For sundry weighty reasons.

*Sec. Mur.* We shall, my lord,  
Perform what you command us.

*First Mur.* Though our lives--

*Macb.* Your spirits shine through you. Within  
this hour at most

I will advise you where to plant yourselves,  
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time,  
The moment on 't; for 't must be done to-night, 130  
And something from the palace; always thought  
That I require a clearness: and with him—  
To leave no rubs nor botches in the work—  
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,  
Whose absence is no less material to me  
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate



Scene 2]

MACBETH

39

Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:  
I 'll come to you anon.

*Both Mur.* We are resolv'd, my lord.

*Macb.* I 'll call upon you straight: abide within.

[*Exeunt Murderers.*]

It is concluded: Banquo, thy soul's flight, 140  
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night. [Exit.]

SCENE II. *The palace*

*Enter LADY MACBETH and a Servant*

*Lady M.* Is Banquo gone from court?

*Serv.* Ay, madam, but returns again to-night.

*Lady M.* Say to the king, I would attend his leisure  
For a few words.

*Serv.* Madam, I will. [Exit.]

*Lady M.* Nought 's had, all 's spent.

Where our desire is got without content:

'Tis safer to be that which we destroy

Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

*Enter MACBETH*

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,  
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
Should be without regard: what's done is done. 12

*Macb.* We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it:  
She 'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice  
Remains in danger of her former tooth.  
But let the frame of things disjoint, both the  
worlds suffer,

Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep  
In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;      22.  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing  
Can touch him further,

*Lady M.*

Come on;

Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;  
Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

*Macb.* So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you:  
Let your remembrance apply to Banquo;      30.  
Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue:  
Unsafe the while, that we  
Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,  
And make our faces vizards to our hearts,  
Disguising what they are.

*Lady M.*

You must leave this.

*Macb.* O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!  
Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

*Lady M.* But in them nature's copy 's not eterne.

*Macb.* There 's comfort yet; they are assailable;  
Then be thou jocund. Ere the bat hath flown      40  
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's  
summons

The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums  
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.

*Lady M.*

What 's to be done?

*Macb.* Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,  
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,

Scene 3]

MACBETH

41-

Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,  
And with thy bloody and invisible hand  
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond 49.  
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens, and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood :  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,  
Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.  
Thou marvell'st at my words: but hold thee still;  
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill: 55.  
So, prithee, go with me. [Exeunt..

SCENE III. *A park near the palace*Enter three *Murderers*.

*First Mur.* But who did bid thee join with us?

*Third Mur.* Macbeth..

*Sec. Mur.* He needs not our mistrust; since he  
delivers

Our offices, and what we have to do,  
To the direction just.

*First Mur.* Then stand with us.

The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:  
Now spurs the lated traveller apace  
To gain the timely inn, and near approaches  
The subject of our watch.

*Third Mur.* Hark! I hear horses..

*Ban. [Within]* Give us a light there, ho!

*Sec. Mur.* Then 'tis he: the rest  
That are within the note of expectation 10.  
Already are i' the court.

*First Mur.* His horses go about.



*Third Mur.* Almost a mile: but he does usually—  
"So all men do—from hence to the palace gate  
Make it their walk.

*Sec. Mur.* A light, a light!

*Third Mur.* 'Tis he.

*First. Mur.* Stand to 't.

*Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch*  
*Ban.* It will be rain to-night

*First Mur.* Let it come down.

[They set upon Banquo.

*Ban.* O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!  
Thou mayst revenge. O slave!

[Dies. Fleance escapes.

*Third Mur.* Who did strike out the light?

*First Mur.* Was 't not the way?

*Third Mur.* There's but one down; the son is fled.

*Sec. Mur.* We have lost 20  
Best half of our affair.

*First Mur.* Well, let's away and say how much  
is done. [Exeunt.

#### SCENE IV. Hall in the palace

A banquet prepared. Enter MACBETH, LADY  
MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX, LORDS, and Attendants

*Macb.* You know your own degrees; sit down:  
At first and last a hearty welcome.

*Lords.* Thanks to your majesty.

*Macb.* Ourself will mingle with society  
And play the humble host.  
Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time  
We will require her welcome.

Lady M. Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends;  
For my heart speaks they are welcome.

*Enter first Murderer, to the door*

Macb. See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks.

Both sides are even: here I 'll sit i' the midst: 10  
Be large in mirth; anon we 'll drink a measure  
The table round. [Approaching the door]

There's blood upon thy face.

Mur. 'Tis Banquo's then.

Macb. 'Tis better thee without than he within.  
Is he dispatch'd?

Mur. My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

Macb. Thou art the best o' the cut-throats: yet he 's good

That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it,  
Thou art the nonpareil.

Mur. Most royal sir,

Fleance is 'seap'd. 20

Macb. [Aside] Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,

Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in .  
To saucy doubts and fears.—But Banquo's safe?

Mur. Ay, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,  
With twenty trenched gashes on his head;  
The least a death to nature.

Macb. Thanks for that.



[*Aside*] There the grown serpent lies; the worm  
that 's fled

Hath nature that in time will venom breed,  
No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: to-morrow  
We 'll hear ourselves again. [Exit Murderer]

Lady M. My royal lord, 32.

You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold  
That is not often vouch'd, while 'tis a-making,  
'Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home;  
From thence, the sauce to meat is ceremony;  
Meeting were bare without it.

Macb. Sweet remembrancer!

Now good digestion wait on appetite,  
And health on both!

Len. May 't please your highness sit..

*The Ghost of BANQUO enters, and sits in  
MACBETH'S place.*

Macb. Here had we now our country's honour  
roof'd,

Were the grac'd person of our Banquo present;  
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness 42  
Than pity for mischance!

Ross. His absence, sir,  
Lays blame upon his promise. Please 't your highness  
To grace us with your royal company.

Macb. The table 's full.

•Len. Here is a place reserved, sir.

Macb. Where?

Len. Here, my good lord. What is 't that moves  
your highness?

Macb. Which of you have done this?

Lords. What, my good lord?



Scene 4]

MACBETH

45

*Macb.* Thou canst not say I did it: never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.

*Ross.* Gentlemen, rise; his highness is not well. 52

*Lady M.* Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;  
The fit is momentary; upon a thought  
He will again be well: if much you note him,  
You shall offend him and extend his passion  
Feed, and regard him not. Are you a man?

*Macb.* Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
Which might appal the devil.

*Lady M.* O proper stuff!  
This is the very painting of your fear:  
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said, 62  
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,  
Impostors to true fear, would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authoris'd by her grandam. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all 's done,  
You look but on a stool.

*Macb.* Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo!  
how say you?  
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.  
If charnel-houses and our graves must send  
Those that we bury, back, our monuments 72  
Shall be the maws of kites. [Exit Ghost.

*Lady M.* What, quite unmann'd in folly?

*Macb.* If I stand here, I saw him.

*Lady M.* Fie, for shame!

*Macb.* Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden  
Ere humane statute purg'd the gentle weal; [time,  
Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd  
Too terrible for the ear: the time has been,  
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,

And there an end; but now they rise again,  
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,  
And push us from our stools: this is more strange 82  
Than such a murder is.

*Lady M.* My worthy lord,  
Your noble friends do lack you.

*Macb.* I do forget.  
Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends;  
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing  
To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;  
Then I 'll sit down. Give me some wine, fill full.  
I drink to the general joy o' the whole table,  
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;  
Would he were here! to all and him we thirst,  
And all to all.

*Lords.* Our duties, and the pledge. 92

*Re-Enter GHOST*

*Macb.* Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth  
hide thee!

Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
Which thou dost glare with.

*Lady M.* Think of this, good peers,  
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;  
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

*Macb.* What man dare, I dare:  
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;  
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves 102  
Shall never tremble: or be alive again,  
And dare me to the desert with thy sword;

Scene 4]

## MACBETH

41

If trembling I inhabit then, protest me  
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!  
Unreal mockery, hence! [Exit Ghost.]

Why, so: being gone,  
I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

Lady M. You have displaced the mirth, broke the-  
good meeting,  
With most admired disorder.

Macb. Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder? You make me strange-  
Even to the disposition that I owe, 113-  
When now I think you can behold such sights,  
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,  
When mine is blanch'd with fear.

Ross. What sights, my lord?

Lady M. I pray you, speak not; he grows worse-  
and worse;  
Question enrages him: at once, good night:  
Stand not upon the order of your going,  
But go at once.

Len. Good night; and better health  
Attend his majesty!

Lady M. A kind good night to all! 121

[Exeunt all but Macbeth and Lady M.]

Macb. It will have blood: they say blood will  
have blood:  
Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;-  
Augures and understood relations have  
By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth  
The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

Lady M. Almost at odds with morning, which-  
is which.

*Macb.* How say'st thou that Macduff denies his person,

At our great bidding?

*Lady M.* Did you send to him, sir?

*Macb.* I hear it by the way, but I will send:  
There's not a one of them but in his house

131

I keep a servant fee'd. I will to-morrow,

And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:

More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good  
All causes shall give way: I am in blood

Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er:

Strange things I have in head that will to hand,  
Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

*Lady M.* You lack the season of all natures,  
sleep.

141

*Macb.* Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and  
self-abuse

Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:

We are yet but young in deed.

[Exeunt.]

### SCENE V. A heath

*Thunder.* Enter the three Witches, meeting HECATE

*First Witch.* Why, how now, Hecate! you look  
angerly.

*Hec.* Have I not reason, beldams as you are,  
Saucy and over-bold? How did you dare

To trade and traffic with Macbeth

In riddles and affairs of death;

And I, the mistress of your charms,



The close contriver of all harms,  
Was never call'd to bear my part,  
Or show the glory of our art?  
And, which is worse, all you have done  
Hath been but for a wayward son,  
Spiteful and wrathful; who, as others do,  
Loves for his own ends, not for you.  
But make amends now: get you gone,  
And at the pit of Acheron  
Meet me i' the morning: thither he  
Will come to know his destiny:  
Your vessels and your spells provide,  
Your charms and every thing beside.  
I am for the air; this night I 'll spend  
Unto a dismal and a fatal end:  
Great business must be wrought ere noon:  
Upon the corner of the moon  
There hangs a vaporous drop profound;  
I 'll catch it ere it come to ground:  
And that distill'd by magic sleights  
Shall raise such artificial sprites  
As by the strength of their illusion  
Shall draw him on to his confusion.  
He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear  
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear:  
And you all know security  
Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

Hark! I am call'd; my little spirit, see,  
Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me. [Exit.

*First Witch.* Come, let 's make haste; she 'll soon  
be back again. [Exeunt.



**SCENE VI.** *Forres. The palace*

## *Enter LENNOX and another Lord*

*Len.* My former speeches have but hit your thoughts.

Which can interpret further: only I say  
Things have been strangely borne. The gracious  
Duncan

Was pitied of Macbeth:—marry, he was dead:—  
And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late;  
Whom, you may say, if 't please you, Fleance kill'd,  
For Fleance fled: men must not walk too late.  
Who cannot want the thought, how monstrous  
It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain  
To kill their gracious father? damned fact! 10  
How it did grieve Macbeth! did he not straight,  
In pious rage, the two delinquents tear,  
That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?  
Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too;  
For 'twould have anger'd any heart alive  
To hear the men deny 't. So that, I say,  
He has borne all things well: and I do think  
That, had he Duncan's sons under his key—  
As, an 't please heaven, he shall not—they should find  
What 'twere to kill a father; so should Fleance. 20  
But, peace! for from broad words, and 'cause he fail'd  
His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear,  
Macduff lives in disgrace. Sir, can you tell  
Where he bestows himself?

*Lord.* The son of Duncan,  
From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth,  
Lives in the English court, and is received



Of the most pious Edward with such grace  
That the malevolence of fortune nothing  
Takes from his high respect. Thither Macduff  
Is gone to pray the holy king, upon his aid  
To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward:  
That by the help of these, with Him above  
To ratify the work, we may again  
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,  
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,  
Do faithful homage and receive free honours:  
All which we pine for now. And this report  
Hath so exasperate the king that he  
Prepares for some attempt of war.

*Lord.* He did: and with an absolute 'Sir, not I,'  
The cloudy messenger turns me his back,  
And hums, as who should say, 'You 'll rue the time  
That clogs me with this answer.'

*Len.* And that well might  
Advise him to a caution, to hold what distance  
His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel  
Fly to the court of England and unfold  
His message ere he come, that a swift blessing  
May soon return to this our suffering country 48  
Under a hand accurs'd!

*Lord.* I 'll send my prayers with him.  
[*Exeunt.*]



## ACT IV.

SCENE I. *A Cavern. In the middle, a boiling cauldron*  
*Thunder. Enter the three Witches*

*First Witch.* Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.  
*Sec. Witch.* Thrice and once the hedge-pig whin'd.

*Third Witch.* Harpier cries: 'Tis time, 'tis time.'

*First Witch.* Round about the cauldron go:  
In the poison'd entrails throw.  
Toad, that under cold stone  
Days and nights has thirty one  
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,  
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

*All.* Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

10

*Sec. Witch.* Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the cauldron boil and bake;  
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing,  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

*All.* Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

20

*Third Witch.* Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,  
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf  
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,  
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,  
Liver of blaspheming Jew,  
Gall of goat, and slips of yew  
Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,

Scene 1]

MACBETH

53

Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips,  
Finger of birth-strangled babe  
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,  
Make the gruel thick and slab :  
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,  
For the ingredients of our cauldron.

All. Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

Sec. Witch. Cool it with a baboon's blood,  
Then the charm is firm and good.

*Enter HECATE*

Hec. O, well done! I commend your pains;  
And every one shall share i' the gains :  
And now about the cauldron sing,  
Like elves and fairies in a ring,  
Enchanting all that you put in.

[Music and a song : 'Black spirits', &c.  
[Hecate retires.

Sec. Witch. By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes :

Open, locks,  
Whoever knocks !

*Enter MACBETH*

Macb. How now, you secret, black, and midnight  
hags!

What is 't you do?

All. A deed without a name.

Macb. I conjure you, by that which you profess, 50  
Howe'er you come to know it, answer me :  
Though you untie the winds and let them fight  
Against the churches; though the yesty waves

Confound and swallow navigation up;  
Though bladed corn be lodg'd and trees blown  
down;

Though castles topple on their warders' heads;  
Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
Their heads to their foundations; though the  
treasure

Of Nature's germens tumble all together,  
Even till destruction sicken; answer me  
To what I ask you.

60

*First Witch.* Speak.

*Sec. Witch.* Demand.

*Third Witch.* We 'll answer.

*First Witch.* Say, if thou 'dst rather hear it from  
our mouths,

Or from our masters?

*Macb.* Call 'em, let me see 'em.

*First Witch.* Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten  
Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten  
From the murderer's gibbet throw  
Into the flame.

*All.* Come, high or low;  
Thyself and office deftly show!

68

*Thunder.* *First Apparition: an armed Head.*

*Macb.* Tell me, thou unknown power,—

*First Witch.* He knows thy thought:  
Hear his speech, but say thou nought.

*First App.* Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!  
beware Macduff;

Beware the thane of Fife. Dismiss me: enough.

[*Descends.*]

*Macb.* Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution  
thanks;

73

Scenes 1]

## MACBETH

55

Thou hast harp'd my fear aright: but one word  
more.—

*First Witch.* He will not be commanded: here's  
another,

More potent than the first.

*Thunder.* *Second Apparition: a bloody Child.*

*Sec. App.* Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

*Macb.* Had I three ears, I 'ld hear thee.

*Sec. App.* Be bloody, bold and resolute; laugh to  
scorn

The power of man, for none of woman born 80

Shall harm Macbeth. [Descends.]

*Macb.* Then live, Maeduff: what need I fear of  
thee?

But yet I 'll make assurance doubly sure,  
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live;  
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,  
And sleep in spite of thunder.

*Thunder.* *Third Apparition: a Child crowned,  
with a tree in his hand.*

What is this,

That rises like the issue of a king,  
And wears upon his baby-brow the round 88  
And top of sovereignty?

*All.* Listen, but speak not to 't.

*Third App.* Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no  
care

Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:  
Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him. [Descends.]

*Macb.* That will never be:  
Who can impress the forest, bid the tree



Unfix his earth-bound root? Sweet bodements!  
good!

Rebellion's head, rise never, till the wood  
Of Birnam rise, and our high-plac'd Macbeth 28  
Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath  
To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart  
Throbs to know one thing: tell me, if your art  
Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever  
Reign in this kingdom?

All. Seek to know no more.

Macb. I will be satisfied: deny me this,  
And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know.  
Why sinks that cauldron? and what noise is this?

[Hautboys.]

First Witch. Show!

108

Sec. Witch. Show!

Third Witch. Show!

All. Show his eyes, and grieve his heart;  
Come like shadows, so depart!

*A show of eight Kings, the last with a glass in his  
hand; BANQUO's Ghost following*

Macb. Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: down!  
Thy crown does sear mine eye-balls. And thy hair,  
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.  
A third is like the former. Filthy hags!  
Why do you show me this? A fourth! Start, eyes!  
What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?  
Another yet! A seventh! I 'll see no more: 118  
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass  
Which shows me many more; and some I see  
That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry.  
Horrible sight! Now, I see, 'tis true;  
For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,



Scene 1]

MACBETH

57

And points at them for his. [Apparitions vanish.]

What, is this so?

First Witch. Ay, sir, all this is so: but why  
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?  
Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,  
And show the best of our delights: 128-  
I'll charm the air to give a sound,  
While you perform your antic round,  
That this great king may kindly say  
Our duties did his welcome pay.

[Music. The Witches dance, and then vanish,  
with Hecate...]

Macb. Where are they? Gone? Let this  
pernicious hour  
Stand aye accursed in the calendar!  
Come in, without there!

Enter LENNOX

Len. What's your grace's will?"

Macb. Saw you the weird sisters?

Len. No, my lord.

Macb. Came they not by you?

Len. No indeed, my lord..

Macb. Infected be the air whereon they ride,  
And damn'd all those that trust them! I did hear  
The galloping of horse: who was 't came by? 140-

Len. 'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you  
word

Macduff is fled to England.

Macb. Fled to England!

Len. Ay, my good lord.

Macb. [Aside] Time, thou anticipatest my dread exploits:



The flighty purpose never is o'ertook  
Unless the deed go with it: from this moment  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,  
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and  
done:

The castle of Macduff I will surprise; 150  
Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword  
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls  
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;  
This deed I'll do, before this purpose cool:  
But no more sights!—Where are these gentlemen?  
Come, bring me where they are. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. *Fife. MACDUFF's Castle*

Enter LADY MACDUFF, her Son, and Ross

L. Macd. What had he done to make him fly the land?

Ross. You must have patience, madam.

L. Macd. He had none:

His flight was madness: when our actions do not,  
Our fears do make us traitors.

Ross. You know not

Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

L. Macd. Wisdom! to leave his wife, to leave his babes,

His mansion and his titles, in a place  
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not.  
He wants the natural touch; for the poor wren,  
The most diminutive of birds, will fight— 10  
Her young ones in her nest—against the owl.  
All is the fear and nothing is the love;

As little is the wisdom, where the flight  
So runs against all reason.

*Ross.* My dearest coz,  
I pray you, school yourself: but, for your husband.  
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows  
The fits o' the season. I dare not speak much further:  
But cruel are the times, when we are traitors  
And do not know ourselves, when we hold rumour  
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear, 20  
But float upon a wild and violent sea  
Each way and move. I take my leave of you:  
Shall not be long but I 'll be here again.  
Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward  
To what they were before. My pretty cousin,  
Blessing upon you!

*L. Macd.* Father'd he is, and yet he 's fatherless.

*Ross.* I am so much a fool, should I stay longer,  
It would be my disgrace, and your discomfort:  
I take my leave at once. [Exit.]

*L. Macd.* Sirrah, your father 's dead: 30  
And what will you do now? How will you live?

*Son.* As birds do, mother.

*L. Macd.* What! with worms and flies?

*Son.* With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

*L. Macd.* Poor bird! thou 'dst never fear the  
net nor lime,

The pitfall nor the gin.

*Son.* Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are  
not set for.

My father is not dead, for all your saying.

*L. Macd.* Yes, he is dead: how wilt thou do for  
a father?

*Son.* Nay, how will you do for a husband?

L. Macd. Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

40

Son. Then you 'll buy 'em to sell again.

L. Macd. Thou speak'st with all thy wit ; and yet, i' faith,

With wit enough for thee.

Son. Was my father a traitor, mother ?

L. Macd. Ay, that he was.

Son. What is a traitor ?

L. Macd. Why, one that swears and lies.

Son. And be all traitors that do so ?

L. Macd. Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged.

Son. And must they all be hanged that swear and lie ?

L. Macd. Every one.

51

Son. Who must hang them ?

L. Macd. Why, the honest men.

Son. Then the liars and swearers are fools, for there are liars and swearers enow to beat the honest men and hang up them.

L. Macd. Now, God help thee, poor monkey ! But how wilt thou do for a father ?

Son. If he were dead, you'd weep for him : if you would not, it were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father.

61

L. Macd. Poor prattler, how thou talk'st !

Enter a MESSENGER

Mess. Bless you, fair dame ! I am not to you known,

Though in your state of honour I am perfect.  
I doubt some danger does approach you nearly :  
If you will take a homely man's advice,  
Be not found here ; hence, with your little ones.



Scene 2]

MACBETH

61

To fright you thus, methinks I am too savage ;  
To do worse to you were fell cruelty,  
Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you !  
I dare abide no longer. [Exit.]

L. Macd. Whither should I fly? 71  
I have done no harm. But I remember now  
I am in this earthly world, where, to do harm  
Is often laudable, to do good sometime  
Accounted dangerous folly ; why then, alas,  
Do I put up that womanly defence,  
To say I have done no harm ?

*Enter MURDERERS*

What are these faces?

Mur. Where is your husband? 78

L. Macd. I hope in no place so unsanctified  
Where such as thou mayst find him.

Mur. He 's a traitor.

Son. Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain.

Mur. What ! you egg.

Young fry of treachery ! [Stabbing him.]

Son. He has kill'd me, mother :

Run away, I pray you !

[Dies.]

[Exit Lady Macduff, crying 'Murder !' Exeunt  
murderers, following her.]

SCENE III. England. Before the King's palace

*Enter MALCOLM and MACDUFF*

Mal. Let us seek out some desolate shade, and  
there

Weep our sad bosoms empty.

*Macd.* Let us rather  
Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men  
Bestride our down-fall'n birthdom. Each new morn  
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows  
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds  
As if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out  
Like syllable of dolour.

*Mal.* What I believe I 'll wail,  
What know believe, and what I can redress,  
As I shall find the time to friend, I will 10  
What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.  
This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,  
Was once thought honest: you have lov'd him well ;  
He hath not touch'd you yet. I am young ; out  
something

You may deserve of him through me, and wisdom  
To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb  
To appease an angry god.

*Macd.* I am not treacherous.

*Mal.* But Macbeth is.  
A good and virtuous nature may recoil  
In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your  
pardon ; 20  
That which you are my thoughts cannot transpose ;  
Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell ;  
Though all things foul would wear the brows of  
grace,  
Yet grace must still look so.

*Macd.* I have lost my hopes.

*Mal.* Perchance even there where I did find my  
doubts.

Why in that rawness left you wife and child—  
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love—  
Without leave-taking? I pray you,



Scene 3]

MACBETH

63 -

Let not my jealousies be your dishonours,  
But mine own safeties: you may be rightly just,  
Whatever I shall think.

*Macd.* Bleed, bleed, poor country!  
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure, 32.  
For goodness dare not check thee! Wear thou thy  
wrongs;  
The title is affeer'd! Fare thee well, lord:  
I would not be the villain that thou think'st  
For the whole space that 's in the tyrant's grasp  
And the rich East to boot.

*Mal.* Be not offended:  
I speak not as in absolute fear of you.  
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;  
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash 40.  
Is added to her wounds: I think withal  
There would be hands uplifted in my right;  
And here from gracious England have I offer  
Of goodly thousands: but, for all this,  
When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,  
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country  
Shall have more vices than it had before,  
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,  
By him that shall succeed.

*Macd.* What should he be?  
*Mal.* It is myself I mean; in whom I know  
All the particulars of vice so grafted, 51.  
That, when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth  
Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state  
Esteem him as a lamb, being compar'd  
With my confineless harms.

*Macd.* Not in the legions  
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd  
In evils to top Macbeth.



*Mal.* I grant him bloody,  
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,  
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin  
That has a name ; but there 's no bottom, none, 60  
In my voluptuousness : your wives, your daughters,  
Your matrons, and your maids, could not fill up  
The cistern of my lust ; and my desire  
All continent impediments would o'erbear,  
That did oppose my will ; better Macbeth  
Than such an one to reign.

*Macd.* Boundless intemperance  
In nature is a tyranny ; it hath been  
Th' untimely emptying of the happy throne,  
And fall of many kings. But fear not yet  
To take upon you what is yours ; you may 70  
Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty,  
And yet seem cold, the time you may so hoodwink.  
We have willing dames enough ; there cannot be  
That vulture in you, to devour so many  
As will to greatness dedicate themselves,  
Finding it so inclin'd.

*Mal.* With this there grows  
In my most ill-compos'd affection such  
A stanchless avarice that, were I king,  
I should cut off the nobles for their lands,  
Desire his jewels and this other's house ; 80  
And my more-having would be as a sauce  
To make me hunger more, that I should forge  
Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,  
Destroying them for wealth.

*Macd.* This avarice  
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root  
Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been  
The sword of our slain kings : yet do not fear ;

Scene 3]

## MACBETH

66

Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will,  
Of your mere own ; all these are portable,  
With other graces weigh'd.

90

Mal. But I have none : the king-becoming graces,  
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,  
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,  
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,  
I have no relish of them, but abound  
In the division of each several crime,  
Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should  
Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,  
Uproar the universal peace, confound  
All unity on earth.

Macd. O Scotland, Scotland !

100

Mal. If such a one be fit to govern, speak :  
I am as I have spoken.

Macd. Fit to govern !  
No, not to live. O nation miserable,  
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,  
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,  
Since that the truest issue of thy throne  
By his own interdiction stands accurs'd,  
And does blaspheme his breed ? Thy royal father  
Was a most sainted king; the queen that bore thee,  
Oftener upon her knees than on her feet,      110  
Died every day she lived. Fare thee well !  
These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself  
Have banish'd me from Scotland. O my breast,  
Thy hope ends here !

Mal. Macduff, this noble passion,  
Child of integrity, hath from my soul  
Wip'd the black scruples, reconcil'd my thoughts  
To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth



By many of these trains hath sought to win me  
Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me  
From over-credulous haste; but God above 120.  
Deal between thee and me! for even now  
I put myself to thy direction, and  
Unspeak mine own detraction, here abjure  
The taints and blames I laid upon myself,  
For strangers to my nature. I am yet  
Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,  
Scarcely have coveted what was mine own;  
At no time broke my faith, would not betray  
The devil to his fellow, and delight  
No less in truth than life; my first false speaking  
Was this upon myself. What I am truly, 131  
Is thine and my poor country's to command;  
Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,  
Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,  
Already at a point, was setting forth.  
Now we 'll together, and the chance of goodness  
Be like our warranted quarrel. Why are you silent?  
*Macd.* Such welcome and unwelcome things at once  
'Tis hard to reconcile.

*Enter a Doctor*

*Mal.* Well; more anon. Comes the king forth,  
I pray you? 140

*Doct.* Ay, sir; there are a crew of wretched souls  
That stay his cure: their malady convinces  
The great assav of art; but at his touch,  
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,  
They presently amend.

*Mal.* I thank you, doctor. [Exit Doctor.]

*Macd.* What 's the disease he means?



*Mal.* 'Tis call'd the evil:  
A most miraculous work in this good king,  
Which often, since my here-remain in England,  
I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,  
Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people,  
All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye, 151  
The mere despair of surgery, he cures;  
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,  
Put on with holy prayers; and 'tis spoken  
To the succeeding royalty he leaves  
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,  
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,  
And sundry blessings hang about his throne 153  
That speak him full of grace.

*Macd.* See, who comes here?

*Mal.* My countryman; but yet I know him not.

*Enter Ross*

*Macd.* My ever-gentle cousin, welcome hither.

*Mal.* I know him now. Good God, betimes remove  
The means that makes us strangers!

*Ross.* Sir, amen.

*Macd.* Stands Scotland where it did?

*Ross.* Alas! poor country;  
Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot 165  
Be call'd our mother, but our grave; where nothing,  
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;  
Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the air  
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems  
A modern ecstasy; the dead man's knell  
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives  
Expire before the flowers in their caps, 172  
Dying or ere they sicken.

- Macd.* O! relation  
Too nice, and yet too true!
- Mal.* What's the newest grief?
- Ross.* That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker;  
Each minute teems a new one.
- Macd.* How does my wife?
- Ross.* Why, well.
- Macd.* And all my children?
- Ross.* Well too.
- Macd.* The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?
- Ross.* No; they were well at peace when I did  
leave 'em.
- Macd.* Be not a niggard of your speech:  
how goes 't? 180
- Ross.* When I came hither to transport the tidings,  
Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumour  
Of many worthy fellows that were out;  
Which was to my belief witness'd the rather  
For that I saw the tyrant's power a-foot.  
Now is the time of help; your eye in Scotland  
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,  
To doff their dire distresses.
- Mal.* Be 't their comfort  
We are coming thither. Gracious England hath  
Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men; 190  
An older and a better soldier none  
That Christendom gives out.
- Ross.* Would I could answer  
This comfort with the like! But I have words  
That would be howl'd out in the desert air,  
Where hearing should not latch them.
- Macd.* What concern they?  
The general cause? or is it a fee-grief  
Due to some single breast?

*Ross.*

No mind that 's honest  
But in it shares some woe, though the main part  
Pertains to you alone.

*Macd.*

If it be mine

Keep it not from me; quickly let me have it. 200

*Ross.* Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever  
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound  
That ever yet they heard.

*Macd.*

Hum! I guess at it.

*Ross.* Your castle is surpris'd; your wife and babes  
Savagely slaughter'd; to relate the manner,  
Were, on the quarry of these murder'd deer,  
To add the death of you.

*Mal.*

Merciful heaven!

What! man; ne'er pull your hat upon your brows;  
Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak  
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break. 210

*Macd.* My children too?

*Ross.* Wife, children, servants, all

That could be found.

*Macd.* And I must be from thence!

My wife kill'd too?

*Ross.* I have said.

*Mal.*

Be comforted:

Let 's make us medicine of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.

*Macd.* He has no children. All my pretty ones? Did you say all? O hell-kite! All? What! all my pretty chickens and their dam At one fell swoop?

*Mal.* Dispute it like a man.

*Macd.* I shall do so;

But I must also feel it as a man:

220

I cannot but remember such things were,



That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,  
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff!  
They were all struck for thee. Naught that I am,  
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,  
Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

*Mal.* Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief  
Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.

*Macd.* O! I could play the woman with mine eyes,  
And braggart with my tongue. But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission; front to front      231  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;  
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too!

*Mal.*                          This tune goes manly  
Come, go we to the king; our power is ready;  
Our lack is nothing but our leave. *Macbeth*  
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above      237  
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer  
you may;  
The night is long that never finds the day. [Exeunt.]

## ACT V

SCENE I. *Dunsinane. A Room in the Castle*

*Enter a Doctor of Physic and a Waiting-Gentlewoman*

*Doct.* I have two nights watched with you, but can  
perceive no truth in your report. When was it  
she last walked?

*Gent.* Since his majesty went into the field, I have  
seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown  
upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper,

Scene 1]

## MACBETH

71

fold it, write upon 't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep.

Doct. A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching! In this slumbery agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you heard her say?

Gent. That, sir, which I will not report after her.

Doct. You may to me, and 'tis most meet you should.

Gent. Neither to you nor any one, having no witness to confirm my speech.

19

*Enter LADY MACBETH, with a taper*

Lo you! here she comes. This is her very guise; and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close.

Doct. How came she by that light?

Gent. Why, it stood by her: she has light by her continually; 'tis her command.

Doct. You see, her eyes are open.

Gent. Ay, but their sense is shut.

Doct. What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

29

Gent. It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands. I have known her to continue in this a quarter of an hour.

Lady M. Yet here 's a spot.

Doct. Hark! she speaks. I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

Lady M. Out, damned spot! out, I say! One; two: why, then, 'tis time to do 't. Hell is

murky! Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard?  
What need we fear who knows it, when none  
can call our power to account? Yet who would  
have thought the old man to have had so much  
blood in him?

*Doct.* Do you mark that?

43

*Lady M.* The thane of Fife had a wife: where  
is she now? What! will these hands ne'er be clean!  
No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you  
mar all with this starting.

*Doct.* Go to, go to; you have known what you  
should not.

49

*Gent.* She has spoke what she should not, I am  
sure of that: Heaven knows what she has known.

*Lady M.* Here 's the smell of the blood still: all  
the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little  
hand. Oh! oh! oh!

*Doct.* What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely  
charged.

*Gent.* I would not have such a heart in my bosom  
for the dignity of the whole body.

*Doct.* Well, well, well.

*Gent.* Pray God it be, sir.

60

*Doct.* This disease is beyond my practice: yet I  
have known those which have walked in their sleep  
who have died holily in their beds.

*Lady M.* Wash your hands, put on your night-  
gown; look not so pale. I tell you yet again,  
Banquo 's buried; he cannot come out on's grave.

*Doct.* Even so?

*Lady M.* To bed, to bed: there 's knocking at  
the gate: come, come, come, come, give me your  
hand: what 's done cannot be undone: to bed, to  
bed, to bed.

[Exit.]

Scene 2]

MACBETH

73-

*Doct.* Will she go now to bed?

72

*Gent.* Directly.

*Doct.* Foul whisperings are abroad. Unnatural deeds  
Do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds  
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets;  
More needs she the divine than the physician.  
God, God forgive us all! Look after her;  
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,  
And still keep eyes upon her. So, good-night:  
My mind she has mated and amaz'd my sight.  
I think, but dare not speak.

80

*Gent.* Good-night, good doctor.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II. *The country near Dunsinane*

*Enter, with drum and colours, MENTEITH,  
CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, and SOLDIERS*

*Ment.* The English power is near, led on by  
Malcolm,

His uncle Siward, and the good Macduff.

Revenge burns in them; for their dear causes  
Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm  
Excite the mortified man.

*Ang.* Near Birnam wood

Shall we well meet them; that way are they coming.

*Caith.* Who knows if Donalbain be with his brother?

*Len.* For certain, sir, he is not: I have a file  
Of all the gentry: there is Siward's son,  
And many unrough youths, that even now  
Protest their first of manhood.

10-

*Ment.*

What does the tyrant?

*Caith.* Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies.  
Some say he 's mad; others, that lesser hate him  
Do call it valiant fury; but, for certain,  
He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause  
Within the belt of rule.

*Ang.*

Now does he feel

His secret murders sticking on his hands;  
Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;  
Those he commands move only in command,  
Nothing in love; now does he feel his title      20  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.

*Ment.*

Who then shall blame

His pester'd senses to recoil and start,  
When all that is within him does condemn  
Itself for being there?

*Caith.*

Well, march we on,

To give obedience where 'tis truly ow'd:  
Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal,  
And with him pour we in our country's purge,      23  
Each drop of us.

*Len.*

Or so much as it needs

To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.  
Make we our march towards Birnam.

[*Exeunt, marching.*]

SCENE III. *Dunsinane. A room in the castle*

*Enter MACBETH, DOCTOR, and ATTENDANTS*

*Macb.* Bring me no more reports; let them fly all.  
Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane  
I cannot taint with fear. What 's the boy Malcolm?

Scene 3]

## MACBETH

Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know  
All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus:  
'Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman  
Shall e'er have power upon thee.' Then fly, false  
thanes,

And mingle with the English epicures:  
The mind I sway by and the heart I bear  
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear. 10

*Enter a SERVANT*

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon!  
Where gott'st thou that goose look?

*Serv.* There is ten thousand—

*Macb.* Geese, villain?

*Serv.* Soldiers, sir.

*Macb.* Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear  
Thou lily-liver'd boy. What soldiers, patch?  
Death of my soul! those linen cheeks of thine  
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face?

*Serv.* The English force, so please you.

*Macb.* Take the face hence. [Exit Servant.

Seyton!—I am sick at heart  
When I behold—Seyton, I say!—This push 20  
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.  
I have liv'd long enough: my way of life  
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;  
And that which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.  
Seyton!

*Enter SEYTON*

*Sey.* What 's your gracious pleasure?

*Macb.*

What news more?

*Sey.* All is confirm'd, my lord, which was reported.*Macb.* I 'll fight, till from my bones my flesh be  
hack'd.

32

Give me my armour.

*Sey.* 'Tis not needed yet.*Macb.* I 'll put it on.Send out more horses, skirr the country round;  
Hang those that talk of fear. Give me mine armour.  
How does your patient, doctor?*Doct.* Not so sick, my lord,  
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest.*Macb.*

Cure her of that:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd, 40  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?*Doct.*

Therein the patient

Must minister to himself.

*Macb.* Throw physic to the dogs, I 'll none of it.  
Come, put mine armour on; give me my staff.  
Seyton, send out.—Doctor, the thanes fly from me.—  
Come, sir, dispatch.—If thou couldst, doctor, cast  
The water of my land, find her disease, 51  
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,  
I would applaud thee to the very echo,  
That should applaud again.—Pull 't off, I say.—  
What rhubarb, senna, or what purgative drug,  
Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of  
them?

Scene 4]

MACBETH

77

*Doct.* Ay, my good lord; your royal preparation  
Makes us hear something.

*Macb.* Bring it after me.  
I will not be afraid of death and bane  
Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane. 60

*Doct. [Aside]* Were I from Dunsinane away and  
clear,  
Profit again should hardly draw me here. [Exeunt.]

SCENE IV. *Country near Birnam wood*

Enter, with *drum and colours*, MALCOLM, OLD SIWARD  
and his Son, MACDUFF, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS,  
ANGUS, LENNOX, ROSS, and *Soldiers*, marching

*Mal.* Cousins, I hope the days are near at hand  
That chambers will be safe. 2

*Ment.* We doubt it nothing.

*Siw.* What wood is this before us?

*Ment.* The wood of Birnam.

*Mal.* Let every soldier hew him down a bough,  
And bear 't before him: thereby shall we shadow 5  
The numbers of our host, and make discovery  
Err in report of us.

*Soldiers.* It shall be done.

*Siw.* We learn no other but the confident tyrant  
Keeps still in Dunsinane, and will endure  
Our setting down before 't.

*Mal.* 'Tis his main hope; 10  
For where there is advantage to be given,  
Both more and less have given him the revolt,  
And none serve with him but constrained things  
Whose hearts are absent too.



*Macd.* Let our just censures  
Attend the true event, and put we on 15  
Industrious soldiership.

*Siw.* The time approaches  
That will with due decision make us know  
What we shall say we have and what owe.  
Thoughts speculative their unsure hopes relate,  
But certain issue strokes must arbitrate, 20  
Towards which advance the war. [ *Exeunt, marching.* ]

SCENE V. *Dunsinane. Within the castle*

*Enter MACBETH, SEYTON and SOLDIERS, with drum  
and colours*

*Macb.* Hang out our banners on the outward  
walls;  
The cry is still, 'They come;' our castle's strength  
Will laugh a siege to scorn; here let them lie  
Till famine and the ague eat them up:  
Were they not forc'd with those that should be ours, 5  
We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,  
And beat them backward home.

[ *A cry of women within*  
What is that noise?

*Sey.* It is the cry of women, my good lord. [ *Exit.* ]

*Macb.* I have almost forgot the taste of fears.  
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd 10  
To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair  
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
As life were in 't. I have supp'd full with horrors;  
Direnness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
Cannot once start me.



Scene 5]

MACBETH

79-

*Re-enter SEYTON*

Wherefore was that cry?

*Sey.* The queen, my lord, is dead.

*Macb.* She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,      20  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

*Enter a Messenger* \*

Thou comest to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

*Mess.* Gracious my lord,      30-  
I should report that which I say I saw,  
But know not how to do it.

*Macb.* Well, say, sir.

*Mess.* As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,  
The wood began to move.

*Macb.* Liar and slave!

*Mess.* Let me endure your wrath if 't be not so:-  
Within this three mile may you see it coming  
I say, a moving grove.

*Macb.* If thou speak'st false,  
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,  
Till famine cling thee; if thy speech be sooth,      40-  
I care not if thou dost for me as much.  
I pull in resolution, and begin

To doubt the equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth; 'Fear not, till Birnam wood  
Do come to Dunsinane;' and now a wood  
Comes towards Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!  
If this which he avouches does appear,  
There is nor flying hence, nor tarrying here.  
I 'gin to be aweary of the sun, 49  
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.  
Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! come, wrack!  
At least we 'll die with harness on our back. [Exeunt.

SCENE VI. *Dunsinane. Before the castle*

*Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, OLD SIWARD, MACDUFF, and their Army, with boughs*

*Mal.* Now near enough; your leavy screens  
throw down,

And show like those you are. You, worthy uncle,  
Shall, with my cousin, your right noble son,  
Lead our first battle; worthy Macduff and we  
Shall take upon 's what else remains to do,  
According to our order.

*Siw.* Fare you well.

Do we but find the tyrant's power to-night,  
Let us be beaten, if we cannot fight.

*Macd.* Make all our trumpets speak; give them  
all breath,

Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death. 10

[Exeunt.



Scene 7]

MACBETH

81

SCENE VII. *Another part of the field*  
*Alarums. Enter MACBETH*

*Macb.* They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,  
But bear-like I must fight the course. What's he  
That was not born of woman? Such a one  
Am I to fear, or none.

*Enter YOUNG SIWARD*

*Young Siw.* What is thy name?

*Macb.* Thou 'lt be afraid to hear it.

*Young Siw.* No; though thou call'st thyself a  
hotter name

Than any is in hell.

*Macb.* My name's Macbeth.

*Young Siw.* The devil himself could not pronounce  
a title

More hateful to mine ear.

*Macb.* No, nor more fearful.

*Young Siw.* Thou liest, abhorred tyrant; with  
my sword

10

I 'll prove the lie thou speak'st.

[*They fight, and Young Siward is slain.*

*Macb.* Thou wast born of woman:

But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,  
Brandish'd by man that's of a woman born. [Exit.

*Alarums. Enter MACDUFF*

*Macd.* That way the noise is. Tyrant, show thy  
face:

If thou be'st slain and with no stroke of mine,  
My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.  
I cannot strike at wretched kerns, whose arms

Are hir'd to bear their staves: either thou, Macbeth,  
Or else my sword with an unbatter'd edge,  
I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be;  
By this great clatter, one of greatest note                  21  
Seems bruited. Let me find him, fortune!  
And more I beg not.    [Exit. Alarums.]

*Enter MALCOLM and OLD SIWARD*

*Siw.* This way, my lord; the castle's gently  
render'd:  
The tyrant's people on both sides do fight;  
The noble thanes do bravely in the war;  
The day almost itself professes yours,  
And little is to do.

*Mal.*    We have met with foes  
That strike beside us.

*Siw.*    Enter, sir, the castle.                  29  
[Exeunt. Alarum.]

*Another part of the field*

*Re-enter MACBETH*

*Macb.* Why should I play the Roman fool, and die  
On mine own sword? whilst I see lives, the gashes  
Do better upon them.

*Re-enter MACDUFF*

*Macd.*    Turn, hell-hound, turn!

*Macb.* Of all men else I have avoided thee:  
But get thee back, my soul is too much charg'd  
With blood of thine already.

*Macd.* I have no words ;  
My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain  
Than terms can give thee out ! [They fight.]

*Macb.* Thou losest labour :  
As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air  
With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed :  
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests ; 40  
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield  
To one of woman born.

*Macd.* Despair thy charm ;  
And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd  
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb  
Untimely ripp'd.

*Macb.* Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,  
For it hath cow'd my better part of man :  
And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,  
That palter with us in a double sense ;  
That keep the word of promise to our ear, 50  
And break it to our hope. I 'll not fight with thee.

*Macd.* Then yield thee, coward,  
And live to be the show and gaze o' the time :  
We 'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,  
Painted upon a pole, and uderwrit,  
'Here may you see the tyrant.'

*Macb.* I will not yield,  
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,  
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.  
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,  
And thou opposed, being of no woman born, 60  
Yet I will try the last : before my body  
I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,  
And damn'd be him that first cries 'Hold, enough !'

[*Exeunt fighting. Alarums.*



*Retreat. Flourish. Re-enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM AND OLD SIWARD, Ross, the other Thanes, and Soldiers*

*Mal.* I would the friends we miss were safe arrived.

*Siw.* Some must go off; and yet, by these I see,  
So great a day as this is cheaply bought.

*Mal.* Macduff is missing, and your noble son.

*Ross.* Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt:  
He only liv'd but till he was a man ;  
The which no sooner had his prowess confirm'd 70  
In the unshrinking station where he fought,  
But like a man he died.

*Siw.* Then he is dead?

*Ross.* Ay, and brought off the field. Your cause  
of sorrow  
Must not be measur'd by his worth, for then  
It hath no end.

*Siw.* Had he his hurts before?

*Ross.* Ay, on the front.

*Siw.* Why then, God's soldier be he!  
Had I as many sons as I have hairs,  
I would not wish them to a fairer death :  
And so, his knell is knoll'd.

*Mal.* He 's worth more sorrow,  
And that I 'll spend for him.

*Siw.* He 's worth no more; 80  
They say, he parted well, and paid his score :  
And so, God be with him! Here comes newer comfort.

*Re-enter MACDUFF, with MACBETH's head*

*Macd.* Hail, king! for so thou art: behold,  
where stands

The usurper's cursed head: the time is free:  
I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,  
That speak my salutation in their minds;  
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine;  
Hail, King of Scotland!

All. Hail, King of Scotland! [Flourish.]

Mal. We shall not spend a large expense of time  
Before we reckon with your several loves, 90  
And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,  
Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland  
In such an honour nam'd. What 's more to do,  
Which would be planted newly with the time,  
As calling home our exil'd friends abroad  
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny,  
Producing forth the cruel ministers  
Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,  
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands  
Took off her life ; this, and what needful else 100  
That calls upon us by the grace of Grace  
We will perform in measure, time, and place:  
So thanks to all at once and to each one,  
Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Sccone.

[Flourish. Exeunt.



## NOTES

### ACT I

#### SCENE 1

ll. 1-10. The *power* of the witches: they have here controlled the elements, and, when it is fair all round, produced foul weather, in which to meet; they have from this heath controlled human actions, and brought about victory in a battle going on elsewhere. Their *knowledge*: they know what is going on at present at a distance, and know how it is about to end in the future.

11,12. Their *nature*: it is to pervert the natural order of things, in the physical as well as in the moral world—to make fair to be foul, to make right to be wrong, and wrong to be right.

1. *again*: their present meeting is just over, during which their incantation enabled them to know that a battle was going on, and to direct its fortunes at their own will.

3. *hurlyburly*: tumult, noise and confusion of battle; Bengali (dialect) *huli-buli*. There is a tone of contempt in the use of the word, such as they feel for all human actions, for all human destinies, even life or death.

4. *lost*: by one side; *won*: by the other side.

8, 9. Each witch is given notice, by her own familiar, of the approach of strangers, of time being up, &c.

**Graymalkin**: little gray cat; *mal* is Moll, Mary.

**Paddock**: little toad;—*ock* and —*kin* are diminutives used towards pets; the familiar of the third witch is not mentioned here by name. But see IV. i. 3.



10. **Anon:** (I come) in a moment; older form, *onan*=in one (moment). Here and elsewhere Shakespeare draws much about the doings of witches from Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (i.e. revealing the secrets of that art).

11, 12. What is fair to other mortals is foul to us, what is foul to them is fair to us; therefore, we like to meet and travel in foul weather. This is all the meaning here, but the enigmatic way of putting it makes us feel uneasily that there is some further and worse meaning underlying the obvious one.

## SCENE 2

In the chronicle, there are two battles fought: one at Lochaber in Inverness-shire, on the west coast, the other, some time after, in Forfarshire, on the east coast; here, in the play, the two battles take place near enough in place and time to enable the sergeant to give an account of both in the same report; his report is set forth in stilted language, as might be expected from a petty officer speaking in the presence of a king; and it is confused for the same reason—speaking in an unaccustomed presence, and for another—his observations were limited to his own immediate surroundings, and he had to do his fighting along with his observing.

3. Scan : Thè néw | èst ståte | Thi's | is thè | sérgeant : double stress on the 3rd foot, monosyllabic; no stress (pyrrhic) on the 4th; 5th, trochee: the unaccented 4th compensates for the doubly accented 3rd; *sergeant* is here not a trisyllable (like *observant* elsewhere), nor is it one in mod. French where, as in English, the "e" merely softens the "g", which without it would be hard (*—gant*).

**sergeant:** (1) common soldier, an old meaning; lit. "*servant*"; or (2) petty officer, present meaning; Lat. *servientem*, from *serviens*.

5. Scan : 'Gainst my | captiv | ity' | Hail | bråve friend : the 4th foot is a doubly stressed monosyllable; the 3rd foot is



stressless, to compensate the 4th foot; *brave* is not a dissyllable here.

**my captivity:** Malcolm had rushed into the thick of the fight, into the enemy's ranks, and had almost been taken captive. This was perhaps his first battle, and for "winning his spurs" in it, the king confers on him the honour named in I. iv. 39, the equivalent for "heir-apparent," as "Prince of Wales" is in England.

7. **Scan:** As ` thóu | didst leave it | Doubtful | it stoód : four feet. The absence of a fifth foot echoes the *pause* of the speaker to draw breath, before he begins his narrative, and the *suspense* of the result of what he narrates; nothing has been "lost" or "mutilated", as critics suppose; and needless is Pope's feeble "restoration" "*doubtful long*"; and his scanning the 2nd and 3rd feet as : didst leave | it doubt | is wrong; faultless monotony of smooth rhythm enfeebles the sense; and its absence is no indication of "mutilation".

9. **choke...art:** hinder each other's efforts to save himself.

11. Holinshed, among the numerous proofs of Macdonwald's villainies, mentions his calling the king a "faint-hearted milksop, fit to govern a sort (set) of idle monks in a cloister".

12. **swarm:** like maggots on a carcass.

13. **kerns:** light-armed Celtic (*i.e.* Irish) foot soldiers. **gallowglasses:** heavy-armed foot soldiers of selected men, retained as personal guards by Irish chieftains. Spenser describes them both in his *Present View of Ireland*. From *kern* is derived *cateran*, Highland cattle-lifter; *gallowglass* is derived from Irish *Gall* (—Gaul—Wal—Welsh) foreigner, and *oglach*, young man, servitor; it originally meant an English armed retainer, serving in Ireland, the English being then called foreigners, *Galls*.

14. **damned quarrel:** (1) cause for which he had wrongfully taken up arms; *his*: Macdonwald's. (2) reading **damned quarry:** doomed prey; *his*: this reading requires

"her". Fortune's; and makes Fortune a hawk, which is inconsistent with her "smile".

15. **show'd**: showed herself, appeared, behaved; for while smiling, she betrayed him. **all's**: all was (past tense).

17. **disdaining**: despising Fortune's smile on his adversary. The battle was first favourable to the rebel, and then went against him.

19. **minion**: favourite; not used in the modern contemptuous sense of a base unworthy favourite. *Fortune* favours the rebel, *Valour* favours Macbeth.

20. The pause in the verse, due to the absence of three feet, indicates the pause during which the two men silently faced each other.

Scan : Till he faced | thè slave | ; till'e, one syllable.

21, 22. **Which**: who; **till**: confused language that makes nonsense; to make sense, the sergeant should have said either (1) "but he unseam'd him", or (2) but he went for him (*i.e.* slashed at him). **till** he &c. As for the "shaking hands" and the "bidding farewell", these acts of courtesy would be out of place towards a rebel, and going or not going through them **till** he was ripped up, would be nonsense.

**nave**: navel: more confused language; no *upward* cut from a sword could have performed this feat; he means to say "from the chaps to the nave"—a *downward* cut, which was more likely to succeed, if at all. The sergeant's confusion of mind here is like Launcelot's in the *Merchant of Venice*, whose indignation made him say that Shylock had starved him till one "could count his fingers with his ribs"; only, the sergeant's is due to his awe at the presence in which he is speaking. Critics who do not see the comicality in these lines and take them quite seriously, charge Macbeth with "want of knightly chivalry" in the first line, and are at pains to show that there is "high authority" for the upward stroke in the second line—namely Dante and a sergeant of the Scots Greys at Waterloo; but these authorities carry the stroke only "from chin to forelock" (Dante) and "from the chin



"upwards" (the sergeant). They should have known that Shakespeare here gently burlesques Marlowe, in whose *Dido, Pyrrhus* deals this impossible stroke on poor old Priam: "Then from the navel to the throat at once he ripped old Priam". Thackeray similarly burlesques Charles Lever in the feats of *Phil Fogerty of the fighting Onety-Oneth*, and ascribes similar tremendous feats to his own *Major Gahagan*. *H. E. I. C. S.*; and Astley's Circus once, in London, showed the (impossible) feats of Shaw, the Life-guardsman, at Waterloo.

The chronicle says nothing of such a fight, but that Macdonwald held out in a castle, killed his wife and children, and then himself.

25. As from the East where the sun rises; storms from the E. or N. E. are meant.

27. **spring**: source, fountain. **swells**: wells, flows. From mistaking "spring" to mean the season of spring, l. 25. has been misexplained as meaning storms during the vernal equinox. The sergeant merely means that storms often arise from the very quarter of the sky where the morning sun rises.

31. **vantage**: the losses and exhaustion of the victors. The play represents Sweno to be in the neighbourhood with his army during the first battle.

32. **furbished**: (1) yet keen and bright, not yet dulled and blood-stained, like those of Macbeth's troops; (2) reading **furnished**: ready for battle, well-equipped. **new supplies**: reinforcements, reserves.

34. **captains**: three syllables, "capitains"—Low Lat. *capitaneus*, whence in French, Spanish, Italian, there is an -i- also; Lat. *caput*, head.

35-43. This speech, unlike the preceding, shows that the gallant sergeant knows very little of the second battle, and draws upon his imagination; he breaks off in the middle of his comic bombast with "I cannot tell", when he finds his imagination running dry.



36. **If . . . sooth:** to tell you the truth; this at once convicts the sergeant; he is conscious that he is not telling the truth, for he does not know the facts, about this battle.

37. **cracks:** discharges; used elsewhere for the sound of thunder, for the report of a great man's death, and later in this play, for the day of judgment, "crack of doom"; the word has now lost its old dignity.

38, 39. (1) the Folio reading makes this one long Alexandrine; in which case the long-drawn line is meant to show the long-drawn fight, multiplying strokes on strokes: (2) reading "so they" as the first foot of a line in which there is a gap of four feet; even this need not mean that "something has been lost", but it means that the poor wounded sergeant draws a long breath before beginning the description, for which he has indeed to collect all his wits.

41. **memorize:** record the memory of, for future generations. **Golgotha:** (Heb.) "place of skulls", a spot near Jerusalem where public executions took place; here, a battle-field strewn with skulls.

43. At last the poor man breaks down—partly from the physical exhaustion caused by his wounds, and partly from exhaustion of his imagination; he is at a loss what to say more about what he knows very little of.

45. **surgeons:** royalty likes to use the plural; it would be beneath the dignity of a king to give orders, in the singular, for a surgeon. Thus ends the first comic scene in the play.

47. His looks show that he has urgent news to give about strange happenings. It is the observant Lennox who says this.

48. **seems to speak:** speaks through his eyes; the expression of his eyes shows the nature of the news he is about to give in the speech from his lips.

**God . . . king:** this prayer is full of meaning, uttered as it is, just after the suppression of a rebellion that threatened the king's life.



49. **cam'st:** comest; a Latinism, used sometimes in Elizabethan English; a Roman would write "I wrote this letter", where we would write "I write this letter".

49-59. Ross gives a circumstantial narrative of the second battle, such as an eye-witness could have given, and such as the sergeant could not give. He also locates the battle correctly—in Fife, and describes the subsequent proceedings, ll. 60-63.

51. **fan . . . cold:** the Norwegian banners flap idly in the wind, and serve as fans to cool our men after the heat of battle. The victorious Scots are not resting on the field of the late battle, and have set up the flags they have captured from the enemy to fan them!

**flout:** mock, insult; before and during the battle, these enemy flags waved defiance and insult at us; but now, after it, their defiances and insults are spent all on the *air* (which does not care a bit for them, any more than we did). This is a flamboyant way of announcing the fact of the victory, the details following.

54. **thane:** Scottish chieftain, who was owner of the lands of his thanedom, and was only bound, with his clansmen, to render military service to the king.

**dismal:** fatal; Lat. *dies malus*. evil day, day of ill omen; Spenser has "Paynim, this is thy dismal day", the day on which thou art fated to die.

55. **Bellona's bridegroom:** Macbeth, after his recent victory, is, in Ross's euphuistic language, newly wedded to a bride, the goddess of war.

**lapp'd in proof:** clad in armour that was proof against sword or spear; as if this armour was his wedding robe.

56. Faced Sweno, to measure his valour against Sweno's; this he does as in l. 57.

58. **lavish:** hitherto unchecked. **hit,** Sweno's.

60. **That now:** so that now; Ross, without heeding the king's interruption, continues his speech, which, most likely, he had prepared beforehand, and in which the elegant euphuism



of the patrician courtier is a contrast to the bungling attempts at fine language made by the plebeian sergeant.

60. **the Norways'**: (plural possessive) of the Norwegians, composition: terms of peace.

62. **disbursed**: paid out (of pocket); Lat. *bursa*, purse.

**St. Colme's Inch**: Island of St. Columba; Inchcolm, on the Firth of Forth.

63. **dollars**: an anachronism; it being centuries after that dollars were first coined.

65. **bosom interest**: the interest we once felt for him in our bosom. **present**: immediate, instant.

### SCENE 3

1-29. These are the mischievous recreations in which the witches spend their Sabbath or Holiday, just as Christian people spend their Sundays (after devotions) in harmless recreations. These they take up in the intervals of any serious business (such as that with Macbeth), which they have in hand:—One kills brute beasts, such as poor pigs, for sheer wanton amusement; another means to inflict lingering torture on a human being for a slight provocation, given, not by him, but by another—his wife; and, further, means a wholesale destruction of human life, if needed, for gratifying this revenge upon a single human being; the third replenishes her stock of materials needed for their charms and incantations. The language in which they describe these doings is “low”, repulsive, for it is language that best fits the loathsomeness of their deeds. But upon these very grounds, and upon the supposed ground of a want of connection with the action, has this passage been “rejected”. It is connected with the action, because it shows us who or what these witches are, by showing us their daily lives and habits, so that they are not made to come out of the air or out of vacuity in space, to deal with Macbeth; that deal is a masterpiece of their professional achievements, but they engage, as we are shown, in many other dealings, on a smaller scale: and

putting all these together, we get into an intimate acquaintance with these witches—we make *chin parichaya* with them; and this is more satisfactory than if we saw them only all-hailing Macbeth and boiling the cauldron for him; for their malignant nature, whether making them kill poor piggies or making them kill Macbeth, is much better brought out by the whole course of their life than by a single exploit in it. These "low" creatures, doing "low" things, require "low" language to describe them; and, therefore, in their case any language *not* "low" would be "un-Shakespearian".

2. **killing swine:** they did this in the world of witchcraft; but in the world of facts swine died of swine fever, and poor, harmless, old women were accused of killing them by withcraft, and were burnt, or drowned, or hanged.

4. **chestnuts:** witches, besides being witches, were old women with ordinary human needs; these three, no doubt, on week days had to eat and drink and do what work old women could do, to keep body and soul together; here, one of them feels hungry, has asked for food, and has been refused; and at this refusal, she drops the nature of an old woman and takes on that of a witch; it was on Sundays that such metamorphoses took place, and the injuries done on week days to the old woman were avenged by the witch with the rites of the devil's Sunday. What a contrast this is, of human poverty and helplessness with the superhuman range of baleful power!

5. **munched:** chewed and chewed, with relish. give me: give me some of them.

6. **aroint thee:** take yourself off, begone; a provincialism, such as an illiterate country-woman might use. **rump-fed:** fat-rumped, plump behind; *rump* does not refer to the food (the best part, or the worst part, of beef, as it is variously taken to mean) but to the fattening effect of good feeding on the eater. **ponyon:** scabby, mangy, creature; a term of abuse that spitefully calls the woman the very opposite of what she really is—a plump, strapping, young woman, contrasting with the shrivelled, feeble, old woman who abuses



her, and stirring up her bile and malice at her youth and health, and all the more at this refusal.

7. **Tiger:** ships with this name have been mentioned in several accounts of Elizabethan voyages, written not long before this play; in one of them, Aleppo is the destination; this being one of the ports where the ships of the Levant Company, or Turkey Company, called.

8, 9. These witches can command the waters and the winds (l. 11), and can take any shape they please; but always under some limitation or other.

**like:** in the shape of; this is one of the limitations; the want of a tail would show that this was not a natural rat; here is an instance of power joined to impotence: a witch can sail in a sieve, can kill a man by inches, but though she can take the shape of a rat, cannot grow a tail to herself!

10. **I'll do:** the "do" is mysterious, its repetition shows determination; she will gnaw and gnaw, till she gnaws a hole in the ship's hull to scuttle it.

14. The voyage, as it progressed from Scotland to Aleppo, round by the Straits of Gibraltar, would require winds from many quarters.

**other:** others.

15, 16. Supply "have" from l. 14. **blow:** blow to.

**quarters:** points of the compass.

**that they know:** that the winds visit, blow to and blow from.

17. **card:** compass-card, on which these points are marked.

18-21. This is a frightfully malevolent revenge for a slight provocation. **dry:** dry of blood.

20. **pent-house lid:** eyelids overhanging the eyeballs, like the roof of a shed.

21. **forbid:** interdicted from fire and water, from food and drink; i.e. rendered incapable of eating or drinking.

22. **se'ennights:** weeks, the reckoning of time by nights is older than that by days; as lunar reckoning is older than solar; we still say "fortnight".



nine: one of the magic numbers; death from inanition would ensue *naturally* in a shorter time; the witch's malice prolongs it into this abnormally lingering death. The usual way to set about doing this, was by making an image in wax of the man, and sticking pin after pin, every now and then, into it; as was done to King Duff.

23. He will grow thinner and thinner till he is reduced to a skeleton, and will die of sheer starvation.

**pine:** starve; A.S. *pinen*, to suffer, to torment, Lat. *punire*, to punish; (*starve* in Old Eng. and *sterben*, still in German, both mean to die).

24, 25. Another of those limitations: she will be able to kill the poor man by inches, but she will not be able to scuttle his ship and drown all those in it; she will be able to raise a storm to do this, but the storm will not be able to do it.

**tempest-tost:** she is taking plenty of strong winds with her for this purpose; besides those needed for the voyage.

28. The efficacy of such ingredients for witches' charms depends on their rarity or on the difficulty and danger in securing them; she must have secured this one on her way back from some former errand of mischief.

32. **weird sisters:** (1) these are Holinshed's words, and he explains that they were "the goddesses of destiny or else some nymphs or fairies, endowed with knowledge of prophecy by their necromantical science, because everything came to pass as they had spoken"; (2) the Folio reads *weyward* sisters"; this reading cannot displace Holinshed's; but if spoken by any one except the witches themselves, the word would have a very apposite meaning—"perverse, to whom foul is fair"; Hecate calls Macbeth her "wayward son"; and here his spiritual sisters also may well be called "wayward", *weird*: fateful; A.S. *wyrd*, fate; *weorthan*, to happen; hence "woe worth the man" means 'may woe happen to him'.

33. **posters of:** swift couriers through.

35-37. Each of the three witches is given three turns in the round dance, as her share in winding up the charm. At their first appearance, we saw none of their rites. Here we see a short



one; and later on we shall see the full rites. This shows the design of one and the same mind, and not the patchwork of interpolation, as some critics would make ll. 1-37 to be.

38. The storm, raised by the witches, has been succeeded by fair weather; this change is all that Macbeth means; but, unconscious that he is doing so, he uses the very words that the witches have used ; and this use shows that, all unaware as he yet is of it, there is an "elective affinity", a "pre-established harmony" between his mind and theirs.

39. Banquo makes this enquiry, because coming from the south, where his thanedom lies, he is a stranger to Macbeth's part of the country, Elginshire.

42, 43. Are you living beings of earth, such as a man may hold converse with (or are you spirits of the dead, and devoid of the power of speech)? **question:** talk to.

Scan : *Thàt mán | mày quéstion | yòu seém | tò ún | dèr-stánd | (me): question: one syllable (quest'); me: hypermetric*

44. **choppy:** chapped, having the skin cracked. The witches enjoin silence to add impressiveness to their utterances that follow.

45. Your appearance makes me take you to be women.

48, 50. They know Macbeth's past, present, and future; and they know more of his present than even he himself does; what they say of his future makes him start back (l. 51) at *some* thought that takes its birth in his head, the moment he hears that prediction, and makes its father horrified at the first consciousness of it. So did Satan become dazed at the birth of Sin out of his head, and the hosts of heaven recoiled at the sight. Banquo remains unmoved at what he now hears, and will remain so at what he will hear later on (ll. 62 &c.).

51. **Good sir:** here, as in Duncan's reception of the two, Banquo is shown to be inferior in command to Macbeth, who had, indeed, helped him out of the straits to which Macdonwald's revolt had brought him in his own thanedom in Lochaber.

53. **fantastical:** phantoms; creations of our fancy.

54. **show:** show yourselves to be, appear to be.



55. **present grace:** present honour and rank—the thaneship of Glamis.

56. **noble having:** attainment of new rank among the nobility; namely, the thaneship of Cawdor.

**royal hope:** the hope of becoming king.

57. **That . . . withal:** with which he seems to be transported; when a sentence began with a pronoun and ended with the preposition governing it ("with" in such cases) *al* was added.

58. **seeds of time:** seeds of events sown in the present, whose fruits will appear in the future; events that time will bring forth.

59. **which will not:** Banquo seems to be sceptical about the *third* seed—the kingship hereafter.

In Holinshed neither Banquo nor Macbeth takes the witches seriously; they jestingly call each other "King of Scotland" and "father of many kings," respectively.

61. Banquo shows indifference to anything they may say about his future.

65. **Lesser:** because up to the present he has been second in command of Duncan's armies, Macbeth being the chief in command; and in future he will be a subject under Macbeth as king.

67. **Thou . . . thou:** both these words are accented: the first foot is a trochee—*Thou shalt*, and the third, an iambus—*thouḡh thou*.

70. Macbeth, though told things in very plain language, wishes to know more; Banquo, though told things enigmatically does not care to have the enigmas explained—those in ll. 65—67, and the tantalizing inversion of the order of the names in ll. 68, 69, where first and second are inverted into second and first.

72, 73. Macbeth here shows his innate cunning and dissimulation. He knows very well that the thane of Cawdor lives, not a "prosperous gentleman" but a captive, and awaiting the king's orders as to his life; but he dissembles this knowledge, to draw out the witches into telling him more. Critics, who do not see through this dissimulation and cunning,

are at pains to show that he is really innocent of all knowledge about Cawdor's treason against the king, and his active help to Macdonwald. Angus mentions this help in ll. 111-114, where see *note*.

76. **owe**: own, possess.

79. The witches are bubbles of the earth, earthy, gross; but unsubstantial, because they could vanish, as bubbles burst.

81. **corporal**: corporeal, material.

80-82. The great irregularity of the metre is meant to show the agitation of mind of both speakers. The Folio ends l. 81 at "*corporal*," and l. 82 at "*wind*," making one line of two feet by itself of "*would . . . stay'd*," with a pause during the wanting three feet before Banquo resumes speaking.

Scan : And thése | are óf'em | whíther | áre they | vánish'd :  
*of them*, one syllable; 3rd, 4th, 5th feet, agitated trochees.

In'tò/ thè air/ an'd whát/seém'd cór/ pòràl : 1st foot trochée,  
4th foot doubly stressed, 5th stressless.

Mel'tèd/ ás breath/ in'tò/ thè win'd/ : 1st foot and 3rd,  
trochees; four feet only with pause of silent wonder. The  
Oxford text ends l. 81 at "*melted*", and l. 82 at "*stay'd*",  
missing these two telling pauses in the Folio reading.

Scan : In'tò/ thè air/ an'd whát/ seém'd còr/ poral mélt |  
(ed) : 1st foot and 4th, trochees; *corporal*, 2 syllables; -ed  
hypermetric.

85. **on**: of; **insane root**: root causing insanity: hemlock perhaps, which is an ingredient in the cauldron scene.

87-89. Macbeth speaks seriously, his mind harping on the predictions; Banquo, flippantly, his mind incredulous about them.

92. **personal venture**: hand to hand fight.

93, 94. Ross's love of fine language makes his meaning obscure; he means to say "the king's wonder at your *many* deeds ("*wonders*", pl.) of valour, and his praises of you as their performer, contend, which shall be greater; so that he does not know whether he should speak more in *your* praise, or speak more of *his* wonder.



**thine:** thy praises. **his:** his wonder.

**silenced:** he remains silent, being unable to utter words either of praise or of wonder.

95. **self-same day:** in the chronicle, the two battles are fought with an interval of time and place; in the play, they are merged into one battle.

96. **stout:** bold; a common meaning in older English, seen still in "stout resistance", "stout heart".

97, 98. This is euphuistic: what Macbeth made were **images** of Death, namely, the bodies of those he had killed; what he was not afraid of was the *original*, namely, Death himself, of whom these were the images; but on the contrary he faced Death fearlessly (for any of the enemy to make him, Macbeth, an "image of Death" too, by killing him).

**strange images:** dead bodies, lying in strange postures, with ghastly wounds on them, that made them look strangely different from living men, but all being yet copies of the same original, Death.

**As . . . hail:** (1) the Folio corruptly reads "as . . . tale", which has been explained as meaning "the posts came as quickly as they could be counted" ("tale" meaning number; "tellers", men who count votes), which is a pointless exaggeration; (2) the reading "hail" is an exaggeration too, but is to the point; for it has this strong support:—In reading Hakluyt's *Voyages*, I came repeatedly across this expression "as thick as hail", used by many different writers, so that it must have been in common use in Shakespeare's time to mean "in rapid succession," but afterwards died out.

99. **post:** (1) message; (2) messenger.

101. Angus, as a plain-spoken man, interrupts this long-winded, aggravating oratory of Ross.

104. **pay:** this is a rebuke to Ross, who takes upon himself the doing of what the king himself should do, by saying all this *in praise* of Macbeth. The pause in the metre shows that Ross feels the rebuke, but it is not long before he resumes and delivers the message that he should have delivered without all this preface.



105. **earnest:** pledge. **greater honour:** Duncan charged Ross with no such message that we know of (see I, ii, 66); and this "greater honour" is an amplification out of Ross's own imagination; but he has been taken seriously by critics, who see in this an intention of Duncan's to abdicate in favour of Macbeth! Really, even Ross's imagination could not have carried him so far.

107. **addition:** title.

109. **devil:** monosyllable, as it still is in Lowland Scotch, "de'il." At this swift fulfilment of one of the predictions, Banquo is struck at once into seriousness; but to *whom* does he ascribe it? In his mind there is no doubt—it is from the devil; in Macbeth's mind there is—it cannot be good, it cannot be evil (l. 132); it is neither from God nor from the devil.

111. **judgement:** forfeiture of life.

112. A long Alexandrine showing slow, deliberate weighing of his words by Angus. **whether:** 4th foot, a trochee.

112-114. Cawdor either gave secret support in money and troops to Sweno, or openly joined him with both, as a rebel. **line:** (1) lit. fill the inside of, i.e. secretly support (say, line his pockets, or rather his sporran, with help in money); or (2) lit. put himself in a line with, i.e. strengthen his forces by joining him with his own clansmen. **vantage:** aids to success (as above or otherwise).

115. **labour'd:** actively and openly worked. **I know not:** because Angus was either at court or in his own thanedom, not among the leaders in the army under Macbeth and Banquo, and not in touch with accurate news of what was going on. Shakespeare, through Angus, lets us know that Cawdor was very likely present at the second battle, and was taken captive and forwarded to the king for judgment; it follows that Macbeth knew that Cawdor was *not* a "prosperous gentleman" (l. 73), and that when he called him so, he was telling a falsehood, with a design.



117-121. The subject engrosses his own mind, and he tries to fathom Banquo's upon it; he tries to find out if he now begins to believe in the predictions, as he himself has done from the first, and if dark thoughts are throwing their shadow over his mind now, as they long have over his own. **gave:** fulfilled their promise about the title of. **no less:** than kingship.

121. **home:** entirely (as you seem to do).

122. The scornfulness of this line is redoubled by the emphasis laid on "*you*". **enkindle.....unto:** lead you to hope eagerly for; set your heart on fire for.

123-127. Spoken aloud, but to himself, not to Macbeth; the words tell us that Banquo is safe from the temptation of the devil's agents, when they 'bait us, men, with a small truth, to betray us with a great falsehood'. **honest trifles:** such as the thaneship of Cawdor, (1) won through honourable ("honest") conduct, or (2) bestowed faithfully ("honest") according to promise. **deepest consequence:** ultimate results of the deepest import; such as the kingship of Scotland, that cannot be attained without treason and crime.

128. **Cousins:** brother thanes; they are not his kinsmen; but his address to them is cordial as that of an equal; Macbeth's is cold and distant ("gentlemen") with a touch of superiority, as if he feels the seeds of kingship already sprouting within him.

128-148. This aside shows that Macbeth is already nibbling at the bait; he looks on the witches, not as Banquo does, but as neutral agents with prophetic power: neither evil, for one of their prophecies has come true; nor good, for, in that case, why should the very thought of the other prophecy fill him with horror? "For that thought, which the witches put into my head, gives birth to another thought, springing all out of my own head—the horrid *thought of murder*; and it transports me, as I think it, out of the present real state of things, that now seems to me as being all fanciful, into another state of things, in which the fanciful seems to be the only reality." We have seen the first disclosure of his innate evil nature to



have been cunning and dissembling falsehood; here follows the second disclosure—namely, the thought of murder, of which there was no suggestion by the witches, but which was all his own.

129. **As . . . prologues:** another reading is "an . . . prologue". **swelling act:** the fifth act; the climax of the play.

130. **imperial theme:** the whole play, whose subject is the kingship of Scotland. Macbeth's language is grandiose, but at the same time roundabout, for he dare not mention the subject, even to himself, in plain words. **I thank you:** for the news you have given me; he speaks in a pre-occupied way, and goes back to the string of his own thoughts, scarcely noticing that the two thanes have drawn aside to speak with Banquo.

131. **soliciting:** incitement, prompting.

132. Macbeth halts between two opinions; Banquo (ll. 124 sq. :) was unhesitating.

135. **suggestion:** temptation; four syllables in an Alexandrine.

136. **image:** the thought of committing a crime in the future; "**imaginings**", l. 139, has the same meaning.

137. **seated:** beating, calm and firm.

138, 139. Fears, due to some wrong actually committed, are not so terrible, as are those arising from the possible consequences of a horrible crime, that itself yet exists only in the imagination. **Present fears:** the terror felt when actually committing a crime.

140-143. This thought of murder that exists only in my imagination, so agitates my weak human nature, that my power to think and to will is paralysed by my fancies, and nothing seems to me to exist actually, except what exists only in the imagination: the actual becomes imaginary, and the imaginary becomes actual, to me.

140. **fantastical:** imaginary.

141. **shakes:** (1) makes it tremble; (2) causes an insurrection in it. **my single . . . man:** (1) my weak human nature (for "single" meaning weak, see, I, vi, 16, and *Tempest*

" a single thing as I am now "); (2) my mind which is a state or kingdom, which, however, consists of only one individual (" single "); his " mind to him a kingdom is ", but Oh ! what a hellish one ! function : powers of mind to think, will, act.

142. surmise : imaginings, fancies, nothing is : nothing actually exists.

143. what is not : what exists, not actually, but only in the imagination. " I cannot believe the actual fact, namely, that I am Macbeth, thane of Glamis and Cawdor ; I can only believe the pure fancy, namely, that I am Macbeth, King of Scotland ; the result is that I do not know what to think, what to do ". This is the state of Macbeth's mind when the thought of crime first enters it ; how different is it, when crime has long been its inmate, and " the firstlings of his heart are to be the firstlings of his hand " ! rapt : transported ; unconscious of all around him.

144, 145. " If I thus feel powerless to stir in the matter, why ! let Fate or Chance stir in it, and convert my fancy into fact, convert ' surmise ' into ' function ' (l. 141) ; if Fate destines me for the crown, but I cannot help myself to it, why ! let her help me to it ". And yet, later on, how very much does he himself " stir " ! Here, he desires to enjoy the fruit of crime, but to lay the commission of crime upon the shoulders of Fate.

146. our strange : strange and new to us. mould : model, the body that these garments were meant to fit. This is Banquo's generous, unsuspecting interpretation of Macbeth's " rapt " behaviour : he thinks the new " garments " are only the thaneship of Cawdor, and never suspects that Macbeth is thinking of the new " garments " of the kingship of Scotland. All this while Banquo has been talking with the two—no doubt quite frankly, and about the witches.

148. " However rough the present day may be, time, in its course, will carry us through it into smooth waters " ; unconscious irony ; we shall see into what waters the course of time carries him, and how it proves him, like the witches, to be a false prophet here.



150. **Give . . . favour:** pardon me, excuse me.

150, 151. "I was not thinking about any *recent* occurrences, but of long past events, nearly forgotten"; lying hypocrisy again; all his thoughts are rapt in these recent events.

152, 153. The words ring hollow with insincerity; it is something *else* that he "reads" every day henceforth, in that book of his mind: it is the words "Macbeth, King of Scotland". **let us:** let us go; omission of the verb of motion, once frequent (in Elizabethan English).

155, 156. "The interval of time, before you and I meet again in private, will weigh the matter, (and inspire us with the result); we can then speak with open hearts about it". Macbeth maintains his neutral, impersonal attitude; it was *Fate* then, it is *Time* now; Time, a disinterested third party, Time, not he and Banquo, the parties interested, will think out the matter for them, as another disinterested party, Fate, will act it out; this is his cunning roundabout way of saying "take time to think about what I have spoken to you on this matter, and let me know". He had hinted about countenance and support to Banquo.

#### SCENE 4

2. **in commission:** charged by me to carry out the execution.

3, 11. Steevens says this scene closely resembles that of the last hours of Essex, executed for rebellion in 1601. Essex was a friend of Shakespeare's friend, the Earl of Southampton.

6. **set forth:** expressed.

9. **in his death:** in the manner of his dying.

10. **ow'd:** owned.

11. **careless:** little cared for, valueless. Cawdor's repentance and the frame of mind in which he meets death, are to find a contrast, later on, in Macbeth's unrepenting end, and his mind set on wholesale slaughter with his own hands.

11-14. Duncan speaks this of the dead Cawdor, whom his unsuspecting nature took so long to find out; he is not aware

how closely it applies to the living Macbeth, who enters as he speaks. **construction:** (1) interpretation; construing the mind from the face; (2) frame, disposition, nature; finding out a man's nature from his face; in (1) it is the observer who construes, in (2) it is the mind that is construed; but both mean the same thing otherwise.

14. **cousin:** Duncan and Macbeth were both grandsons of Malcolm II, King of Scotland.

15-21. Duncan's good heart overflows with apologies—first for delay in rewarding Macbeth, next for the inadequacy of the reward; there has been neither the one nor the other, as any one except Duncan would have thought; but he thinks there has been so much of both that he accuses himself of "*ingratitudo*"! What is this ingratitude, compared with Macbeth's?

16-18. Thy meritorious deeds march so fast, and follow so quickly on one another, that my rewards cannot overtake thy deeds. **slow:** too slow.

19. The due proportion of thanks in words, and rewards in deeds; these latter must be gifts other than the thaneship already conferred, and for which he receives Lady Macbeth's effusive thanks afterwards.

20, 21. **only:** only this. **all . . . pay:** all that I can give.

22-27. Hollow insincerity and lip-service again: he has, he says, only discharged the duty it was the king's prerogative to command, and the discharge is payment enough for him.

22. **service and loyalty:** loyal service; two words expressing a single idea.

23. **it:** the loyal service: an impersonal way of saying "In doing the service I owe, I pay myself".

27. **Safe . . . honour:** (1) Folio reading—"Safe toward your" (no comma after "everything"): sure to tend towards your; (2) Blackstone's emendation—"Everything, safe toward you" (comma after "everything", and "you" instead of "your") : love and honour towards you being safe, remaining intact; "safe" being a law term, so used in the oath of allegiance to a feudal lord by a vassal.



28. Duncan embraces Macbeth, as he does Banquo in l. 32.

30, 31. **nor... no less:** old use of a double negative for a single one; to be written now, either (1) **and... no less** or (2) **nor... less.** **done so:** deserved.

32. Banquo's reply takes up the metaphor used by Duncan towards Macbeth: the two both grow in Duncan's heart; but Banquo grows like a crop of wholesome corn, Macbeth like a crop of poisonous weed.

33-43. Duncan's goodness next spreads towards the other deserving nobles, and—fatal step—towards his eldest son, on whom he confers a title that creates him heir to the throne; and—fatal step again—he announces his royal pleasure of visiting Macbeth at his own castle.

34, 35. The fullness of joy hides itself, in sheer playful wantonness, behind what look like tears of sorrow; his joy plays at hide-and-seek with onlookers; in plain words, "the tears I shed are tears of joy, not of sorrow".

36. **nearest:** this applies particularly to Macbeth, though not addressed directly to him.

37. Hereditary succession to the throne was not in those days fixed by law; hence the necessity of nominating a successor beforehand (as in ancient and mediæval India); by law of *tanistry* Macbeth would have expected to be nominated; hence this action of the king is a new incentive to his not thwarted ambition.

39-42. Malcolm is to be the *moon*, and the nobles here honoured are to be the *stars*, in this new firmament that Duncan creates. The 'stars' may have been suggested by the insignia of the orders of nobility of later days than Duncan's, e. g. the Star of the Garter, (the Star of India, of course, did not exist then).

44. **The rest:** that rest; to work for you, is pleasant rest to me; to rest without working for you, is painful labour to me.

45. **harbinger:** forerunner; Old Eng. *herbergeour*, one who went in advance to secure harbourage or lodgings for a great man and his retinue, when travelling, or for an army



on the march ; A. S. *here*, army, *bergen*, to shelter ; " *harbour* " once meant this shelter, later, a shelter for ships.

48-53. The balance had hitherto stood even, inclining neither way, and leaving Macbeth in suspense midway; this nomination converts the balance into a lever, pushing him to resolve upon immediate action, and action at his own hands now, leaving nothing to Fate to take her own time to act for him.

50. It is not night when Macbeth speaks this; but his vivid imagination pictures the darkness of the night when he means to enact this, with no stars to look down upon and bear witness against his deed.

52. Let my eyes shut themselves to what my hand does be: happen; " *that* " and " *it* " (1.53) are pronouns whose antecedent noun lies hidden in his mind.

54. *so*: as you have described him to be. Banquo has been telling Duncan of the deeds of valour done by his chief in command, without any feelings of envy.

55. **his commendations**: your praises of him.

58. **It**: used admiringly; cf. " 'Tis a noble Lepidus" in *Julius Caesar*.

## SCENE 5

1. **They**: it is the latter part of the letter that is being read out here; the earlier part contained the antecedent " witches ".

2. **report**: (1) Macbeth has, ever since meeting them, been actively making enquiries about the witches, from which he comes to know of their supernatural powers; it is his wish to know *more* from them when they vanished, that has led to this activity. **perfectest**: most reliable, about the truth of which I am quite satisfied. (2) " *report* " cannot mean his personal experience of them; that is mentioned below separately; nor can " *perfectest* " mean ' at first hand, the testimony of my own eyes, or my own ears ', (this latter referring to Ross's announcement that fulfilled the first prediction).



5. They themselves became air, and melted into the surrounding air; this is the airy part (" bubbles ") of their earthy nature.

7. missives: messengers.

11. deliver: communicate, reveal, to you.

12. partner of greatness: this is the dearest tie between them—the tie, not of love, of home, of family, but of ambition; herein the Macduff's contrast with the Macbeths.

13. dues: that which, as wife, you have the right to share in.

16-31. Lady Macbeth has laid to heart at once what her husband has asked her to do; but she has her fears about him: she fears he is of too kindly a nature to cut his way straight to greatness, too conscientious to gratifying ambition at the cost of a crime, too timid about employing the means, though very desirous of attaining the end; " Come to me; my words will pour into you the resolution that you lack, will remove all obstacles that stand between you and that crown with which the decree of Fate and the prophecy of supernatural power have already crowned you". Such is her estimate of her husband's nature, and such is her confidence in herself to mould it better for the attainment of their common object; in both she is mistaken; in the long run, his resolution goes to frightful lengths, far beyond what she ever meant to carry it to; and her own power over him quickly ceases to lead him, and dies out long before he is brought to a stop in his career.

18. milk . . . kindness: she mistakes his habit of shilly-shallying for kindness of disposition; his disposition turns out to be full of the venom of cruelty, not of the milk of kindness; but her words have been taken at their full face value by those critics who think they see in Macbeth a " noble nature " perverted by a wicked wife; the course of the action proves this valuation to be wrong; for while her influence on him wanes till it ceases, his cruelties go on increasing till they pass into fiendish lengths; and it also proves that some of this " milk " lies hidden in her own bosom, all unknown to herself, when she fancies that bosom to be all of steel.



20. **not without**: she under-estimates his ambition, barely allowing him any by this double negative; she judges him by the standard of her own ambition that has flamed up fiercely at once, but is destined quickly to die out.

21. **illness**: wrong-doing. **should**: that should.

21-26. She over-estimates his conscientious scruples about the means: "You wish to win what you know it would be wrong for you to possess, but you will not employ the wrong means for winning it; you want to have a thing, for getting which there is only one way, but that way you are afraid to follow; you are afraid to do a thing, yet you are sorry to see it left undone".

24-26. Readings over which there have been long discussions, the crucial point being the placing of the quotation marks :—

(1) quotation marks at "Thus thou must do": in this case read "have it," i.e. if thou wishest to (have it).

(2) quotation marks at "Thus thou . . . have it": in this case read "have me", since it is the crown that speaks.

23. **thou'ldst**: thou wouldest, thou wishest to have.

24. **That**: the crown. (1) **it**: the crown. (2) **me**: the crown. **thus must do**: must murder Duncan. Throughout her speech, Lady Macbeth never *names* the thing or the act that, both, she has nearest to her heart.

25. **And**: supply "thou'ldst have," meaning "thou wishest that to happen", namely, the murder.

(3) quotation marks at "Thus thou . . . be undone": in this case too read "have me". Of these (1) is the best of hearing: it makes the crown shine before Macbeth's (or her) eyes, and the shining apparition itself is a *silent* question, "Do you want to have me?" Then does the image of the murder of Duncan loom by the side of the crown; the crown seems to point to the image, and *seems* to say aloud "You must do *this*". It weakens the force of those four terrible words to make the apparition of the crown say one word more after them; therefore reading (2) is weak, and (3) weaker still; it is best to make all the words from "if thou" to "be un-

done" Lady Macbeth's comment on the four words spoken by the crown; to make the crown speak more as in (2) is needless, for its apparition itself has already as good as spoken to that effect; and to make the crown speak as in (3) is to make it comment and moralize upon its four words, and is insufferable from an apparition. The dagger never speaks a word, and yet how much does its silence speak! The crown does not speak a word either, but its look speaks four, which to Macbeth (or Lady Macbeth) speak volumes, and that: (1) read "and that's what": a feeble evasive emendation; (2) read "and that", meaning 'and thou must do that', supplying *do* from the nearest verb; (3) read "and that", meaning 'an*i* thou wishest to have that', meaning again 'and thou wishest to have that happen, which rather thou dost fear to do'—'thou wishest Duncan to be murdered, but thou darest not murder him'.

Scan: and that | râthèr | thóu do st | feá'r | tò dò |.  
2nd and 3rd feet trochees, 4th foot doubly stressed monosyllable. The feeble reading in (1) seeks to smooth the forceful irregularity of this line.

27. That I may breathe into your ears the resolution I have formed. **spirits**: her resolution, instant and fearless, as opposed to his spiritless irresolution.

28. **valour**: as opposed to his cowardice. **my tongue**: unconsciously does Lady Macbeth speak the truth about herself—her valour lies in words of fire, and when it comes to action it is *she*, not Macbeth, who proves to be the coward.

29. **round**: crown.

30. **metaphysical**: supernatural. **doth**: singular verb to apparently two nominatives, that really express one idea, "fate joined to the supernatural"; another reading is "both". **seem**: appear in vision before my eyes; her eyes see a *Vision of Macbeth Crowned*; critics, missing the meaning of this graphic word, propose tame emendations "seek", "aim" &c.



31. To have thee crown'd withal: (1) to wish thee to be crowned withal; (2) to have crowned thee withal (simply changing the order of the words).

31. Impatient though her wishes are, she is so startled at the quickness with which they seem to be realizing themselves, that she can hardly believe the messenger when he delivers his message.

36. had . . . him: outstripped him. him: Macbeth.

37. for: for want of.

39. great news: this has one meaning to the ears of the messenger, but quite another to herself, as appears immediately

39, 40. raven . . . croaks: the man ("one of my fellows" 1.36) who brought the message, and delivered it, hoarse and out of breath, to this other man (called "messenger" here) for transmission to their mistress—which he does here. Lady Macbeth does not see the first man, but she infers his hoarseness from what the second man tells her (1.37). It would be altogether "stagey" to make a real raven utter a real croak near the castle, and to make her hear it; the superstition about the croaking of ravens, birds of ill omen, merely supplies her with the metaphor, and she compares the man to a raven, is hoarse: the raven's croak is usually hoarse, but this fatal prognostication makes it unusually hoarse when uttering it.

entrance: three syllables for emphasis, *éntérâncé*.

41. Scan: Un'dér | my bát | tlèmen'ts | C | you  
spirits: a pause before "come", during which she draws a long breath.

41-55. Lady Macbeth's nervous temperament has been strung to a tension that throws her into a state of trance, in which she sees visions, in succession, of crowns, of murder, of the spirits that inspire murder, of thick night that conceals murder, of the knife that will commit murder. Macbeth, too, will see the vision of a dagger, as she sees that of the knife; and she herself will again fall into a trance, when other visions--

those of the *consequences* of this murder—will pass before her eyes in that sleep-walk.

The spirits that she invokes in this trance, are unlike the gross agents of hell that her husband trusts in; nor are they the recondite agents of the devil, "Arioch and Marcij, spirits of revenge," that learned research has dragged into light, and of whom, Shakespeare, poor, ignorant man, had never heard; but they are invisible beings that sway the passions of man, and turn them into the paths of evil; they are the "bad angels" of mediaeval belief, that take possession of men's souls on earth, and into their hands does Lady Macbeth deliver herself up. She invokes them to change her woman's nature into that of a fiend, that she might, with *her own hand*, plunge the murderous knife into the sleeping victim. The terrible energy of this invocation has led critics to take her at her own word, and make her out to be a fiend, as a son's feeling for a murdered father makes Malcolm also call her a fiend. But the course of the action of the play will show that she is a *fiend only in words*, but a woman—though a bad woman, still a woman—in actions. The spirits, whom she here invokes, do *not* answer her prayer; and she continues to be a woman; it is Macbeth that becomes a fiend.

42. **mortal thoughts:** thoughts of murder.

44. **cruelty:** it is not she, but Macbeth, who develops this cruelty, that she asks to be filled with, herself. **make thick:** and so render me insensible to pity.

45. **remorse:** pity; this thickened blood will clog the passage against pity from entering into her heart.

47. **keep peace:** make a truce, interpose an interval of idle inaction.

48. **it:** the purpose.

49. **take:** exchange, change into. Lady Macbeth must, then, have recently become a mother, and must have lost her infant. She wishes to be unlike her husband, with *his* "milk of human kindness"; but it is again her husband, not she, who develops the gall and venom (in himself) that she wishes to be developed in *her* breast; she has felt a parent's



affection; he never shows that he has felt it; who, again, is the more human, and who the more a fiend?

50. **sightless substances**: invisible essences. Both husband and wife invoke the aid of supernatural powers; but how different are they! Those invoked by one are grossly visible, repulsive to the sight, given to loathsome rites, ridiculous, though terrible; those invoked by the other, themselves invisible, use no visible rites, manifest themselves only in their bare essences, and in their terrible power, that destroys her at last.

51. **wait on**: are ready to aid and abet. **nature's mischief**: evil deeds prompted by man's own evil nature. They lend their supernatural aid to the evil inherent in human nature ("nature"). **thick**: dark; cf. "light thickens" (III, ii, 50).

52. **thee**: thyself.

53. She never uses this "keen knife"; her woman's nature shrinks from using it; it is her husband who uses it.

54. **blanket...dark**: the darkness of night that covers the sleeping world; the word is ominously suggestive of a murder *in bed*; but poetic critics, shocked by the prosaic homeliness of the word "*blanket*", have emended it to "*blankness*", "*blackness*", and other inanities.

51-55. She calls upon the darkness of night to make itself darker still, by wrapping itself round with the blackness of the smoke of hell, that her eyes may not see the wound that her hand will inflict, and that the pitying eyes of heaven may not see her, through that blackness, about to inflict it, and may not cry out to her to withhold her hand from the act. In this very blood-curdling picture that she draws, do we not see a woman's nature shrinking from the very thought of the deed, that she *talks* about doing with her own hands?

56. **hereafter**: to be fulfilled hereafter.

57. **letters**: we have heard only of one letter read out in part; but this plural shows that he had written more letters than that one to her on the subject; the plural here is certainly not a Latinism for "letter" (singular).



58. Scan : This ig | nòrànt | présent | and I | féel n'ow : 1st and 5th feet each doubly stressed, 2nd and 4th unstressed, 3rd trochee : this vigorous irregularity is smoothed into feeble regularity by adding "time" superfluously after "present". ignorant present: the present in which I do not know how things stand.

59. the instant: the present; i.e. the *future* that is so vividly present to her mind; in the ecstatic state in which she now is, she is ignorant of the present, but knows the future—a state, the reverse of the normal, in which we know the present, and are ignorant of the future.

61. Macbeth's reply is faltering—"to-morrow, I think he said"; her rejoinder is a clenching "never." A pause follows during which she silently surveys him.

63. Spoken slowly with a withering look of contempt at him: "your face has "murder" plainly written on it; don't be such a fool as to show on your face what is in your mind".

64. the time: people about you at any time.

65. Look... time: look and behave as you see others about you doing; suit yourself to the mood of the company you are in, and as the occasion requires.

68. provided for: the sinister meaning of this is quite understood by both.

69. Leave the business in my hands, to manage and arrange it all.

70, 71. This single night's work will provide for the rest of our lives; there is an irony in this hope that she is unconscious of.

72, 73. He mumbles out that he would like to talk further on the subject with her, before resolving to do anything.

She replies readily, "Very well; only shake off that hang-dog look on your face; hold up your head and show a bold face". favour: expression on the face; changing expression, changing colour, is always a sign of fear.

74. We shall see what this "all" consists of.

## SCENE 6

1, 2. This must be Duncan's first visit to Inverness Castle. **seat**: situation. **nimbly**: in a bracing way.

3. **Unto . . . senses**: to our senses so as to soothe them. **gentle**: proleptic use, i.e. the effect of the adjective that follows that of the verb, is apparently made to precede it or to anticipate it.

1-3. Some critics take these few words of the king as meant to give "repose to the mind" after the "tumult" that precedes and the "horror" that is to follow; while other critics see in them Shakespeare's incapacity to feel and describe "the grandeur of the everlasting hills" and "the magnificent sweep of the river and estuary", visible from Inverness Castle. The former are partly right: there is real repose in the mind of the poor unconscious victim-to-be; but there is harrowing of the mind in those who know the fate that awaits him *inside* that castle, whose *outside* he so innocently admires; there is tragedy, not repose, for us in these few words; and this is the reason why they are confined to the castle, and not extended to the scenery around it. The latter convict themselves; for poor Duncan is not a tourist, touring the Scottish Highlands in search of the sublime and beautiful.

3-10. This must be Banquo's first visit too; his remarks are those of a more closely observant mind than was the old king's.

4. **temple-haunting**: loving to build its nest in churches. **approve**: prove.

5. **lov'd mansionry**: the situation it likes best for building its nest in.

6. **jutty**: projecting piece of masonry or stonework.

7. **coign of vantage**: corner best suited for its purpose.

**but . . . hath**: where . . . has not.

8. **pendent bed**: the mud-built nest of the house-martin is often attached to the wall *below* a projection, thus seeming to hang from it. **cradle**: monosyllable.

10. **delicate**: delicious, delightful. **S. D. Enter Lady Macbeth**: Macbeth is not with her to welcome their guest; he



has not been able to compose his features well enough to venture to show his face; how well does she herself "look like the time", while he cannot!

11, 12. Sometimes the love that my people bear towards me, makes them press their attentions on me so much, that they become troublesome; but, overlooking the trouble, and remembering only the love, I thank them. **us : me** (the royal plural).

13, 14. Apply my case to yourself; forgive me the trouble I give you, and thank me for the love I bear you. **God . . . us :** may God reward me; may he yield us his blessing. **your :** that I give to you, that I cause you.

14-20. This is her acknowledgment of the "payment" that Angus had mentioned in I, iii, 104. This speech, like Macbeth's in Scene iv, is lip-service, but is richer in hyperbolical expressions.

16. **Were:** would be. **single business:** a weak return; a play on words with "double" above. **contend against:** strive to requite.

17. **deep:** calling forth deep gratitude. **broad:** consisting in rich gifts—of "broad" lands, perhaps; Duncan had bestowed extensive *jagirs* on Macbeth.

19. **to:** in addition to.

20. **hermits:** beadsmen, in duty bound to *pray for your long life* and prosperity; she says this, who knows how short that life is going to be made by her own hands; and she says it with perfect self-possession! It was customary for the kings of Scotland to bestow alms every year upon a number of King's Beadsmen or Blue Gowns (the number increasing by one for every year of the king's age), who in return were bound to pray for the king's long life. Edie Ochiltree, in Scott's *Antiquary*, is such a beadsman.

22. **purveyor:** harbinger, I, iv, 54 (instead of his being my purveyor).

25. **We:** the royal plural.

26. **theirs:** their family and household. **what:** their property and possessions. **in compt:** in trust, to be accounted for.

28. Ever bound to return to you what is your own. For all this, she cleverly evades answering the king's enquiry about his host being absent.

30. Scan : And sháll | cóntí | nùe ó' | òr grá | cès towards | (him); "our" is drawn out with royal graciousness into a dissyllable *ou-er*, "towards" is a monosyllable, "him" is hypermetric.

## SCENE 7

1-28. If the murder were to bring me unalloyed success, and if its commission were to be the end of the matter on this earth, then I would do the murder at once, and care very little for its possible consequences in the next world; but there may be consequences in this world too, besides success; for here on earth there is retribution too, as they say there is in the next world; here, murder will have murder, and my deed may recoil on my own head. He is my king, my kinsman, my guest—whose life I am thus triply bound to guard; his meek nature, his high office, his blameless conduct in it, would raise universal execration against his murderer, and a universal wail of pity for the murdered; such a life as his has been, gives me no excuse for such a deed against it; it is inexcusable ambition alone that urges me against it: and if I act on it, I may overdo it; and I may have to meet consequences in *this* world; *this* is my fear.

How clearly does Macbeth see and put the *case*, how blindly does he act against what he has seen, how terribly do the consequences fall on him, and in that very world in which he fears them most—in which *alone* he fears them at all!

1. If there was an end of the matter, when the deed was done.

3. trammel up: tie up, prevent from breaking forth: the metaphor is from either (1) a "trammel" or shackle for compelling a horse to amble, and preventing it from breaking forth into a gallop; this is supported by the "up"; or (2)

a "trammel" or net for catching birds or fish; this is supported by the word "*catch*".

4. **his surcease**: either (1) his (Duncan's) death; or (2) its accomplishment; *his*—its—of the murder; or (3) its trammelling up; *his*—its—of the consequence. **but**: only, if nothing followed.

5. **be-all**: sum of all that can happen. **end-all**: conclusion, last term in that summation, with no further consequence to follow. **here**: on earth; he repeats this word (ll. 6, 8), for the fear of consequences on earth is his great fear. How different are Hamlet's fears—all for consequences in the next world!

6. **bank...time**: (1) reading "*shoal*": this life on earth which is like a shallow sand-bank, in the immeasurably deep and boundless ocean of eternity; sailing over sand-banks is dangerous; so is life on earth; and to Macbeth it seems to be all plain sailing in the ocean of eternity—with no dangers to fear. This is the better, because by far the bolder, reading. (2) Folio reading "*school*": this life on earth which is a school, in which we teach and are taught; ll. 8 and 9 explain this (rather tame) metaphor; but it little suits Macbeth's contempt for the next life which reading (1) brings out. By derivation "*bank*" (sand-bank) and "*bench*" (*school-bench*) are the same word, differently spelt; but "*shoal*" meaning shallow water, and "*shoal*" meaning crowd (a *shoal* of fishes) are of different derivations, and it is the second "*shoal*", not the first, that is spelt "*school*" (a school of whales), as in Dutch, and this "*school*" is different from "*school*" for instruction, Gr. *schole*, leisure; critics have confused these two words, in explaining the text.

7. **jump**: risk, skip over; he who is so full of fears while sailing over the sand-bank of life on earth, is ready to skip lightly over the ocean of eternity, is ready to take a leap in the dark into the next world! To Macbeth "*here*" is everything, is all, "*hereafter*" is nothing; and this word "*jump*" well suits his character, and favours reading (1)

above; while a Macbeth sitting at school, to learn and teach, suits it less, or not at all.

8. **judgement**: punishment. **that**: so that.

10. **plague**: afflict, strike down; Gk. *plege*, stroke; hence "plague", an outbreak of a disease. **even-handed**: impartial, giving *quid pro quo*, death for death.

11. **commends**: commits, forces us to accept; see III, i, 39. **our poison'd**: poisoned by us for another.

13. **kinsman**: see note I, iv, 14.

17. **faculties**: powers as king.

18. **clear**: spotless, blameless.

19. **trumpet-tongu'd** loudly announcing: in paintings, angels are often represented as blowing trumpets to deliver their messages from heaven to men on earth.

21. **babe**: the wailing cry of a helpless, innocent babe, dead almost as soon as born, awakens pity in the breasts of all who see it naked, and who hear its cry, for the death of this old man, helpless and innocent like itself; this babe cries, not for itself, but out of sympathy for another, like itself in suffering an undeserved death. The reference is to a superstition that infants who died soon after birth ("naked", not yet clothed after birth) before they could be baptized, flitted like ghosts through the air, bewailing the hard fate, that excluded them from heaven (as it was believed to do).

22. In paintings young cherubs are often represented as riding, mounted on clouds; Raphael's and Murillo's cherubs are the finest examples. **or**: or like, or in the shape of.

23. **sightless**: invisible. **couriers** . . . **air**: the winds.

24, 25. The winds, rising into storms, carry the news to the ears of all on earth; and the tears of all on earth flow in torrents of rain at the news; and this torrential rain drowns the storms that cause it! The extravagance of this Euphuism suits the boundlessness of the pity—the pity of the whole world—that it is meant to describe, and thus makes it beautiful in its very extravagance; but this fancy of poetry is based upon fact in science—high winds often stop blowing when rain begins to fall; in this way, then,



"tears shall drown the wind". no spur: no just grounds, no just incentive, no just excuse (that Duncan's life and character can supply him with).

26. intent: the horse he wants to mount; the purpose he wants to carry out. but: a conjunction (not a preposition); supply "I have". only: an adverb (not an adjective); there is no confusion of metaphors here, as some critics say there is.

27. Vaulting: inordinate, unlawful; the proper way to mount into the saddle, is to do so by the stirrup; Macbeth's age, ability, public services, popularity, all would have been such a "stirrup" by which he could have become successor to Duncan (after his natural demise) by law of tanistry, in preference to the youth and inexperience of Malcolm; but he tries, instead, to leap into the saddle, when he plots Duncan's murder, to become his successor. o'erleaps itself: leaps too high, too vigorously, than it should have.

28. other: he was going to say "side", but is stopped from saying it by Lady Macbeth's entrance.

25-28. It is pitiful to read the wild readings and nonsensical explanations proposed by critics—"the rider", "the theory", "the earth", "the withers", "its sell" &c. as readings for "the other" and "itself"; and the following :—"there were two horses, the horse Intent and the horse Ambition", "it is absurd to give Macbeth one spur for two sides of a horse", "the other" is "the other horse" &c. as explanations of the lines; all because "sides" pl. and "side" sing. (understood) have been confounded; when plainly, "sides" (1.26) means the flanks of the horse, and "side" means the (other) side of the road; the latter being the correct word (understood) and its meaning in 1.28.

30. Duncan, on missing Macbeth at the supper-table, had enquired after him; Macbeth, after a short stay at the supper, had left the room, unable any longer to be near Duncan or among the guests, where the talk had mostly been in praise of the host, from king and company.

31-35. This short-lived resolution is brought about by the "golden opinions" about him, the host, for his services to the king, that had been the chief subject, no doubt, of talk before and during the supper; this had made him withdraw, conscience-stricken for the moment; his soliloquy followed, as fresh supper-courses were being taken in. The talk of the company had been an echo of the "golden opinions" held of him by "all sorts of people"—all classes—for his success against the rebels. Here, Duncan's own place in the love of his people, Macbeth's place in the good opinion of his countrymen, high and low, Duncan's trust unreservedly given, Macbeth's loyalty imperatively due—all conspire to dissuade him; he clearly sees they do it, and should do it;—and yet,—and yet,—

32. **bought**: earned; "purchase" has a similar meaning.

34. **would** : should.

35. **so soon**: this shows a lurking wish, not to abandon but only to postpone, the design.

34, 35. **worn . . . soon**: this dress, that he speaks of as himself already wearing and reluctant to cast off, is the "honours" and the "golden opinions" he has already earned.

35, 36. **hope . . . yourself**: this dress, that she speaks of, is the dress that he hoped to wear—the crown, the sceptre, the royal robes; his present *khilat*, his robe of honour bestowed on him by King Duncan, he wears as "thane of Cawdor"; the robe he hoped to wear was as "King Macbeth". **slept**: slept off the drunken fit.

37. **green**: sickly.

38. **freely**: heartily, unstintedly.

39. Henceforth I look on your love for me to be a drunken frenzy too, that will soon go off. True, she speaks of "love", but it is love inseparable from ambition; she says—"if you have no ambition, then you have no love for me"; she means something more also—"if you have no ambition, I have no love for you". How different is Lady Macduff's idea of love!

40. **act and valour**: act of valour, bold deed; hendiadys.

44. **wait upon**: follow upon.



45. A proverb—"The cat would eat fish, but would not wet her paws".

35-45. Was it the delusion of a drunken man that made you fancy you were going to be king; and are you grown sober now, and look with fear upon the thought of it? If your ambition for yourself is so fickle, your love for me must also be as fickle. Are you one man when you frame a wish, and quite another man when it comes to carrying it out? Are you bold in wishing, and a coward in carrying out your wish?

47. *do*: the Folio has "no" (corruptly). *is none*: 's not a man.

47-59. Not a man? Then, were you a beast when you swore to do this? No; "who dares do more" is *more* than a man—is all the more a man, is not a beast—is not *less* than a man. When you first thought of it, neither time nor place was fit, and yet you pressed forward to make both fit; now, when they have both made themselves fit, you draw back. Shame upon you! If I had sworn as you have, I would have killed my infant, even as it took suck at my breast, rather than break my oath. *what beast*: by "*none*" Macbeth meant something *more* than man; with quick wit she perverts his meaning, as if he meant to say something *less* than man.

48. Macbeth had done this in letters written before the one in the play, or in the part of it preceding what is read out; a critic mistakenly supposes that he had done this "at a conference" with Lady Macbeth; when and where did this conference, this *bat-chit*, this *guft-gu*, this *katha-bartta* between the two take place? Ever since I, v, 1-31, it has been clear that "this enterprise" had been broken to her *before* that time, and therefore *before* they met in I, v, 55, and therefore not at a "conference".

50. *to be*: in being.

52. *adhere*: cohere, conspire to forward your resolve.

51, 52. Like 1.48, this is proof that Macbeth had written other letters than the one read out in the text, to Lady Macbeth, on this subject; and that in them he had hinted at murder to her, had added that time and place were not oppor-

tune, and that he himself would contrive to make them so. All these letters were written *after* the action began, and not "before the commencement of the play", as a critic mistakes them to have been.

53. **made themselves:** have become opportune, without any effort on your part to make them so.

49-54. She changes from scorn to persuasion—No; when you formed that resolution, you were a man; when you carry it out, you will be all the more a man. **unmake:** unnerve.

54-59. These words are a convincing proof of Lady Macbeth being a *woman*; had she proceeded to the *deed*, it would have been as convincing a proof that she was a *fiend*; but she could not have possibly proceeded to do this to her infant, as she could not actually proceed to do what she said she would do to Duncan. Through the seeming heartlessness of this threat, there showed itself the tenderness of a mother's heart, as through that of the other threat, there showed itself the tenderness of a daughter's heart, that held her hand from one who merely looked like her father. This is not the callousness of a fiend.

58. Scan : And dashed | the brains out | had I / so sworn | as you; "out" is slurred in second foot; fourth foot trochee; the first and second feet are given forth, fierce, quick, breathless.

59. **to this:** to do this; I have told you what I would do to my own infant; and here you are hesitating about an old man, who is nothing to you. **If... fail:** Macbeth's long soliloquy has been upon the consequences of success; these four words raise the question of those of failure. Lady Macbeth answers it.

59-72. In that answer there are no "ifs", no fears, no voice of conscience, no outraged sentiment of loyalty, no terrors of universal execration, that success may call forth; all is certainty, all is a sure-laid plan that cannot fail; that plan



she will lay; leave it all to her. That plan, when carried out, looks terribly like a housewife's ordinary, daily domestic work—preparing the drink for a meal, laying the table with cutlery on it, clearing away, wiping the cutlery after use during the meal, and washing the hands clean after the meal is over! In all this, she again is intensely a woman—her horizon narrowly limited to the present, her mind unerringly certain in its activity within those limits, and powerless to go beyond them, or to rise above them; it is intent upon its set work within that chamber, to be done at this present hour; it cannot think of the golden opinions of the world that might be shattered, cannot think of the consequences that might follow, in the future.

59. **We fail**: both words are accented: "we" full of the emphasis of perfect confidence in themselves, "fail" full of that of withering contempt at the idea of their failure. The great actress, Mrs. Siddons, misled by the "but", misunderstood and misacted these two words.

60. **But**: only, (an adverb); this actress misunderstood it for a conjunction. Scan: Bút scréw | yóur cour | age to—the stick | ing pláce: first foot doubly stressed, third unstressed; all you have to do is to screw your courage to the last turn the thread of the screw will take, so that it will not slip out, but stick fast.

64. **wine and wassail**: drink on festive occasions, when toasts were drunk; **wassail**: A. S. *waes hael*, be of good health. **convince**: ply (them) till they are overcome (with drink).

65-67. According to the anatomy of Shakespeare's days the brain was divided into ventricles or compartments—one occupied by the memory, as an ante-chamber, leading to a chamber occupied by the reason; Memory thus being a gentleman-usher to King Reason; the fumes of wine getting into the head, convert first the memory, and then the reason, into fumes also! **receipt**: receptacle; the ventricle occupied by

reason. **limbec only**: mere alembic or still; alembics were a potent apparatus with alchemists for the distillation of gold out of baser metals. The metaphor changes here from a king's chamber to an alchemist's laboratory; reason, heated by wine drunk, becomes a vapour that fills the retort; the application of the metaphor ends here in the text; if we continue the process, then the vapour will pass from retort to condenser, where gold would gather in a liquid, and then in a solid, state.

70. **put upon**: allege against, accuse of.

71. **spongy**: soaked with drink.

72. **quell**: act of killing; "quell" and "kill" are the same word.

72-82. Macbeth's admiration of his wife's plan finds expression in terms that have an eye to himself also; in wishing the lady-planner to be the heroine-mother of young heroes, he hopes, in that way, to be the father of a son and heir to the throne he is aiming at for himself, and thus to baulk Banquo out of his hopes for his issue. But he wants to know the exact meaning of her words "what not...spongy officers"; he gives the meaning he puts upon them; she confirms it; all his scruples are removed, and he is now completely converted to her teachings in the art of murder; as a proof, the pupil repeats the golden rule that the teacher has taught him. With this transformation of Macbeth the Irresolute into Macbeth the Resolved, the first Act ends.

74. **receiv'd**: taken to be true.

77. **other**: otherwise.

78. **as**: (1) than, or (2) since.

79. **settled**: fixed in resolution, **bend up**: stretch (like a bow).

80. **corporal agent**: faculty of my body; he has already dedicated every faculty of his mind to the idea of the crime; he now dedicates the faculties of his body to the work of carrying out the idea into an action.

81. **mock**: let us mock; like a good pupil, he here repeats quite correctly the lesson his teacher has taught him in I, v, 64 sq., and gaily says he is going to practise it.



## ACT II

## SCENE 1

1-9. Banquo also has been tempted by thoughts of ambition; but he prays to God to deliver him from temptation.

2, 3, "clocks" and "twelve" are anachronisms; there were no clocks or almanacs in those days.

4. Hold: there; giving some article of arms or armour to his son, as he puts them off on his way to his chamber to retire for the night. From Fleance's replies, we can guess that he is a lad—in age between Donalbain and the little boy Macduff. husbandry: economy, in putting out their lights early.

5. thee: thyself. that: some other article of accoutrement.

6. heavy summons: tired nature's call for sleep, that weighs down his eyelids.

7. And yet, because of the "cursed thoughts" that haunt him, Banquo dreads going to bed to seek for sleep.

8. cursed thoughts: thoughts about the prediction of the witches had made him pass many a night of broken sleep; he firmly believes that they came from the devil ("cursed") first through that prediction, and since, through Macbeth's attempt to corrupt his loyalty; and he dreads their recurrence.

9, 10. Life was insecure in those days; even in a friend's house, where he now is, he puts himself on his guard on hearing approaching footsteps, and gives the challenge "who's there?".

14. larges: liberal gifts. offices: the servants' quarters, i.e., to the servants in the castle. This, the last time that we see (rather, hear of) Duncan alive, he is gracious as ever, his hand distributing gifts, his heart full of happiness. Holinshed mentions the gifts.

15. And the most precious of his gifts is to the house, whom we have just seen planning his murder.



16, 17. **shut up... content**: concluded his message to the hostess by expressing his perfect happiness at the reception he had had from her.

17, 18. Being unprepared for the king's visit, we could not show him all the attention we should have wished to show. We can judge how far unprepared they both were.

10. **All's well**: don't worry yourself over it; everything was done as it should have been done. Macbeth is hypocritical about shortcomings, Banquo magnanimously overlooks them, if there were any, and we see an ominous irony that he is unconscious of—all's *not* well.

20-30. It is Banquo who begins talk on the subject, but it is Macbeth who has it most at heart; the one is frank, the other dissembles—he "never thinks about it"; yet, if Banquo cares, he "would like to talk with him" on it; and, "if you give me your support, depend upon it, you will not be sorry for having given it; if the thing succeeds, much honour for you follows"; to which Banquo replies—"And I shall accept it on *one* condition alone—no honour you bestow on me must ever touch the loyalty I owe to my king, and the answer I owe to my conscience".

20. At night, if waking, it is the accursed thoughts that keep him awake if sleeping, it is the accursed thoughts that give him accursed dreams; and fear of thoughts and of dreams alike makes him dread going to bed.

22, 23. **we can entreat**: I can beg from you. **we would**: I wish to. In both plurals he means himself; his tone in this is one of superiority, and his words are those of conventional politeness to a guest; Banquo's are deferential, as to a superior in rank, and as to the master of the house.

25-29. Both now alter tone; in business-like terms of bargaining, the one states what he wants, and what he is ready to pay for it; in firm, decisive, clean-cut terms, the other replies that he is ready to give what is wanted, but on *one* condition only. Now, *what* is it that Macbeth wants of Banquo, and *what* is that one condition on which Banquo will give it? (1) One answer given is this:—that Macbeth had hinted to Banquo



that *murder* was the "nearest way" to the fulfilment of the second prediction about himself; had asked Banquo to silently acquiesce in the murder, and to actively support him in the election that must follow; that Banquo should have refused to do either, should have warned Duncan beforehand, and should have denounced Macbeth afterwards; that he did neither, and therefore became an accessory both before and after the fact; and that therefore *his* (Banquo's) murder is a "just punishment" for his complicity. This answer is wrong, because it quite ignores the *one* condition mentioned above. (2) I explain thus:—The talk in ll. 21-30 shows that Macbeth had proposed *something* to Banquo on the matter of the succession, in the event of the old king's death; what that something was that Macbeth's cunning caution allowed him to reveal, we are nowhere told; it *may* have been something that would involve no disloyalty in Banquo towards Duncan, if it was to be done on Duncan's natural demise; it *may* be something that might involve disloyalty, if it was to be done *otherwise* (such as, through rebellion, or through murder, not uncommon ways in those days to secure succession to a throne—Duncan himself had been placed on the throne through a succession of murders). Therefore does Banquo make *this one condition*—"I shall support your election, if my support does not involve my loyalty". We nowhere find that Macbeth's hint had gone so far as to hint at murder, much less at murder *on that night*; and it is an insult to Macbeth's intelligence to say that he had gone so far; therefore the plea, that Banquo should have warned Duncan, fails; at the election meeting, the thanes present had to go on the evidence that Macbeth's diabolical cunning had created, to prove his innocence; and in the face of it, it would be quixotic courage in Banquo (or in Macduff), though he suspected much, to denounce Macbeth—quixotic because any denunciation would not merely be useless to prevent Macbeth's election, but would expose the denouncer's own life to Macbeth's vengeance; therefore, strong as were Banquo's suspicions (they were stronger than even Macduff's, because he knew more), Banquo's "*wisdom*" (Macbeth's own



word) made him wait, that he might shape a course of action that would be both safe for himself, and effective against Macbeth; Macbeth suspected what he was waiting for, and anticipated it by murdering Banquo. Macduff, less wise, did not conceal his suspicions; and we know what the result was.

25. **cleave . . . consent:** abide by the advice I have given you; what this "advice" is, we can guess from the above; elsewhere, too, in the plays, "consent" means advice; it is a veiled word for "my interest"; "attach yourself to *my* interest"—"vote for my election to the crown, when the time comes; and you will find that it will be for *your* interest also to do so". **when 'tis:** when "that business" (1.23) is carried out; when my object has been attained; what this mysterious "it" or what "that business" exactly is, we are never clearly told—or how much of his mind Macbeth had imparted to Banquo, and how much of it he had kept to himself and Lady Macbeth; but he had imparted enough to rouse Banquo's fears that "it" might be more than his loyalty could allow. We can guess what "it" was; but we can be sure what it was *not*—it was *not* a fool's act of letting Banquo into the secret of that night's projected work, and asking him to keep *mum* about it!

26. He will make him a *burra admi*; this bait of "honour" here held out, is that when Macbeth becomes king, he will do his best to secure the succession of Banquo's issue after him, to the throne, to the exclusion of Duncan's issue. **so:** provided. **none:** no honour. Banquo puts a wholly different meaning on that word "honour"; "I shall accept the 'honour' you mean to confer on me, provided I do not lose the sense of honour implanted in my breast; I shall consent to being made a *burra admi* by you, provided it does not make me lose my *dharma*, my *samman*, my *izzat*, in my own eyes".

27. Provided, in seeking to increase my "honour" (as you understand it), I do not lessen or lose my "honour" (as I understand it).

28. Banquo defines his *sense of honour*; it consists in a clear conscience and in an unstained loyalty. **franchis'd soul:**



a clear conscience, being his duty to God. **allegiance clear:** an unstained loyalty, being his duty to his king.

29. **be counsell'd:** follow your advice, "cleave to your consent" (l. 25). **good repose:** Banquo's uncompromising answer disconcerts Macbeth's cunning attempt to get him to commit himself, and he breaks off with an abrupt "good night".

30. **sir:** Banquo returns it with the same firm composure, underlying a deferential tone of address, that he has maintained throughout this short but fearful encounter with the tempter's dangerous weapon.

31, 32. This was a preconcerted signal (l. 62); but the servant is put off with a plausible reason, to avert any misgivings.

33-61. Macbeth's imagination rushes up to a white heat, and then as quickly cools down to the realities of the business in hand. In the vision of the dagger, the supernatural is again at work; it may be that the witches directly send this vision; it may be that it is called up by the witchcraft of his own heated imagination, which thus becomes an infernal wizard within his breast, spurring him on to the deed, to which the other witchcraft, that outside him, has all along been luring him; or it may be due to both witchcrafts. Whatever the cause, he soon discovers the delusion, and dismisses it with a contemptuous "there's no such thing"; and his mind returns to the present business; the hour is come; his supernatural allies are at work to aid him with their rites; they send forth the spirit of murder abroad, stalking stealthily through the darkness; he follows it towards his victim, calls upon the earth, on which he stealthily steps, to be deaf to his footfall, and upon night to be silent, so that no sound might startle him away from effecting his purpose.

34. **toward:** a monosyllable. **clutch:** he wants to test by the touch what presents itself to the sight.

36, 37. **sensible to feeling:** perceptible by the sense of touch.

40. **form as palpable:** you are so distinct to my eyes, that I feel sure that you must be as distinct to my touch.



41. He draws his own dagger that he might have something in his own hand that he can both see and touch.

43. I . . . use: it has been arranged that I should use.

44, 45. Either my other senses refuse to confirm the evidence of my eyes, or the evidence of my eyes outweighs that of all my other senses. )

46. **dudgeon**: handle. **gouts**: drops, clots. **Lat**: *gutta*, drop.

47. **which . . . before**: (1) which was not the case before; (2) which (dudgeon) was not "gouted" so before; whatever the grammar, the meaning is the same.

33-47. The dagger appears before his eyes, presents its handle to him, points the way to the chamber, gets covered with blood, and then vanishes;—what a living, active, knowing, thinking ghost of a dagger! It knows Macbeth's thoughts, and shows him the way for their fulfilment. **there's . . . thing**: it has vanished, and therefore it could not be a real dagger that I could not only see, but could grasp in my hand.

48, 49. **informs . . . eyes**: has presented the thing to my eyes. **one half-world**: an anachronism for Macbeth's days, when the sun was thought to rise and set on the whole of a flat earth in the course of a day.

50. **abuse**: deceive; a very common meaning in Elizabethan authors.

51. Scan: The cûr | tain'd sléep | wi"tch | crâft cé | èbrâtes: third foot doubly stressed monosyllable, or stressed syllable following a pause.

51, 52. This very hour are Hecate and her witches celebrating their rites, to aid Macbeth, and to make sure that he will not shrink back at the supreme moment; what more likely than that for this reason they had, as part of these rites, raised the vision of the dagger? Both the human (in his wife) and the supernatural (in the witches) come to Macbeth's aid in this his first crime; in those that follow, he dispenses with this human aid, and depends, first on himself and the supernatural aid, and then all on himself.



52-54. The wolf's howl, like the voice of the watchman calling out the hour of night, warns the spirit of murder that it is now the hour for action. **alarum'd**: called to arms, put on the alert.

55. **Tarquin's**: the younger Tarquin, who violated the chastity of Lucretia; he was the son of Tarquin the Proud, King of Rome (B.C. 510). **strides**: moving with long, stealthy steps; people naturally take long, slow steps in the dark; here the criminal does so also, from the fear of detection, added to this cause. **design**: the accomplishment of his design.

56. **like a ghost**: silently, noiselessly. **firm-set earth**: firmly fixed on its foundation, like his own firmly fixed resolution, and unlike that airy vision.

58. Let not the very stones of the court-yard crunch under my tread. **whereabout**: whereabouts.

59. **present horror**: present horrid silence.

58-60. Any sound would disturb the silence in which a murderer likes to work, for the slightest sound would fill him with the fear of detection; the very stones, grating under his tread, would seem to his tense nerves to be listening to his foot-fall, and, by their crunching, to be giving information against him!

61. **cold breath gives (to)**: unnerves, chills. **gives**: give; it is a common inaccuracy in Elizabethan grammar to make the verb agree in number with the nearest noun, though it is not its nominative.

62. This is the signal that Lady Macbeth was to give.

64. To Macbeth, who cares little for heaven or hell in the next life, it is a small matter to which of the two places even a good man like Duncan is destined to go; "he may go to hell, for all that I care", he says blasphemously.

## SCENE 2

1. Lady Macbeth has had recourse to a stimulant, without which help, she felt herself unequal to the task, that her nervously sensitive temperament has to face.

3. **Hark**: The repeated utterance of this word by both of them, shows what tension of nerves it is that makes them start at the slightest sound, and misinterpret it as a sign that they are being detected.

3. **Peace**: a long pause, during which she listens in silence, is indicated by the want of so many feet in the rhythm.

4. **fatal bellman** : watchman announcing that the hour of death has arrived for someone; the bellman's usual office was to announce the hour of night.

5. **sternest**: because a farewell for ever. **good-night**: the bellman, in those days, would also cry out these words, as a sentinel nowadays calls out "all's well".

7. **mock**: by going to sleep, when they should have kept watch.

8. So that it has made them dead drunk.

9-15. While she is waiting below, speaking to herself her hopes, her fears, and hearing or fancying she hears noises, he has been stealing upstairs, has been startled out of his presence of mind by some noise he heard or fancied he heard, and has cried out, himself thus breaking that silence that he had invoked to his aid, and nearly betraying himself; she hears his cry, and her hopes and fears turn into despair at the failure that it seems to mean; he, after waiting, and hearing nothing more, goes on, does the deed, comes back, and meets her where he had left her waiting below; both are thus torn by doubts, fears, despair, till the very last moment of the deed; and we are kept in suspense also till then. How flat, how inartistic, would it have been, if Macbeth had marched straight on, done the deed, marched straight back, met his wife, both showing no sign of agitation of their minds, and if the whole thing had gone off "according to plan", and without a hitch! See note ll. 17, 18.

11, 12. Either (1) **attempt**: if he has made it, and it has failed. **deed**: if the attempt has succeeded. **confounds**: ruins, destroys. This explanation gives a striking irony: as things turn out, it is the deed, it is the success of the attempt, that confounds, that ruins, them. Or (2) **attempt**: all that



precedes the deed. **deed**: deed when done. **confounds**: agitates; this, the modern meaning, is much less common in Shakespeare than the older meaning in (1); and (2) gives a less forcible sentiment than (1). **Hark**: this was when she heard his approaching footsteps, and took another false alarm.

13, 14. The true woman in her again shows itself: she who talked of sticking her "keen knife" into him with her own hands, has only, with those hands, laid the knife ready for her husband to stick it in; she who talked of dashing out her own infant's brains, cannot touch a hair of an old man's head, though he is nothing to her, and though he stands in the way of her ambition.

16. I heard no *human* voice, which alone would be a cause of alarm. **cricket**: this insect is also called a death-watch.

17, 18. **Did . . . speak**: refers to Macbeth's cry in l. 9. To this he replies that he cried out as he was "descending"; this has been taken to mean *either* descending *before* he committed the deed, when he ran back to ascertain where the cry came from, *or* descending *after* committing it. Her words "*now*" and "*ay*", confirm this second meaning; the usual meaning given by critics and actors is the first, and is the one adopted in the sketch of Macbeth's movements given in ll. 9-15 above; if we accept the second meaning, confirmed by the words "*now*" and "*ay*", his movements must be altered thus:—he proceeds to the chamber without interruption, meets with the terrors he describes in ll. 28-44, *within* the chamber, and meets with the alarm that makes him cry out in l. 9 when he is returning *from* the chamber.

20. **second**: next to Duncan's.

21, 22. **sorry**: horrid; "*sore*" is the same word, but "*sorrow*" is different in derivation.

23. **There's**: there was. **one**: supply "who". **laugh**: we can see irony in this laugh; it is unconscious irony that in sleep laughs at Macbeth; for he is, by this stab, digging his own grave; he is stabbing his own happiness, and preparing the way for the stab that is to end his own life.



24. **stood**: stood still outside: he had enquired about the sleepers in the next room, because he had heard these voices from it; she had named only *one* as its occupant, and now corrects herself, and says there were two, the other being, of course, Malcolm.

25. **But**: but, to my relief, they suspected nothing.  
**address'd . . . to**: sought for. **them**: themselves.

26. She sees she had mistaken in naming *one* in l. 20 (no doubt, from agitation of mind), and corrects herself, on hearing him say he heard two voices.

27. **bless**: defend, protect.

Scan : On'écried | Gód bléss | 'us an'd | Amén | thè  
óth | (er) : first foot trochee, second and fourth spondees,  
third pyrrhic, -er hypermetric.

28. **As** : as if. **hangman's**: executioner's.

29. **fear**: cries of fear. Scan : Listening | their fear | I' could | nòt sày | A' mén: first and third feet trochees, fourth pyrrhic, fifth spondee (doubly stressed). "I" is very emphatic, his voice rises as the line proceeds, till ll. 30, 32, 33 are spoken in a shriek; and in each of them, "I" and "Amen" are stressed. Macbeth's inability to utter the word 'Amen', is the effect of despair; it is not due, as critics say, either to any "true feeling of religion", or to "egotistic hypocrisy" like that of Louis XI; it is due to remorse; and this remorse soon passes off, and his inherent love of evil re-asserts itself.

33. Scan : I' hàd | móst néed | òf bléss | ing ànd | A' mén.

35. **so**: if we do so. **make . . . mad**: an unconscious prophecy: they both go mad, but in different ways. Hitherto, Lady Macbeth's voice, her words, her manner, have all been soothing, have all tried to calm him; but he proceeds without heeding her.

38. Sleep that restores calm to the mind, distracted by care. **knits up**: disentangles and retwists. **ravell'd sleave**: silk thread whose filaments have got untwisted and entangled.

39. The rest and refreshment after the daily toil and worry of life, the bath that washes off the sweat of toil. **death . . . life:** the daily death of the worries of each day's life, as death is the end of the worries of a whole life.

40. **second course:** It is comic to try to explain this, as has been done, by a reference to "pudding" as the first and minor course, and "roast beef" as the second and chief course, at dinner (as they actually were in Shakespeare's days). Macbeth's exalted imagination looks upon the daily life of man as a feast in which the "first course" is *the day's work*, and the "second course" is *the night's rest*; the day's work as well as the night's rest may both well be elements in an honest man's enjoyment of the daily *feast* of life, that nature places before him every twenty-four hours. Macbeth, instead of enjoying this second course, like any honest man, and going off to sleep the sleep of the innocent, has kept awake to destroy another's sleep by murdering him, and is to be punished by having his own sleep destroyed for the future.

41. **What . . . mean:** Lady Macbeth, whose unimaginative, matter-of-fact mind cannot understand this nonsense about sleep being a second course in a feast, loses patience, and changes her soothing manner into sharp tones of rebuke, with which she tries to recall him, from his poetic wool-gathering, to prosaic facts that require his attention; but he continues his poetic ravings.

43, 44. 'I, Macbeth, have murdered one in his sleep; and therefore, I, Macbeth, by whatever name or title I call myself, shall sleep no more in peace.' The goddesses of revenge, the Furies, will pursue him to inflict this punishment of sleeplessness; they will detect him as the murderer Macbeth, under whatever name he may in vain seek to shelter himself; and this criminal, to escape detection, will plead an *alias* in vain!

45-51. She recalls him to the actual present that requires their immediate attention. **Who . . . cried:** nobody; it is only your imagination. **to think:** in thinking. **brain-sickly:** as if your mind is disordered; as if you are raving. **witness:**

accusing proof. **Why . . . place:** he had done so, having lost all presence of mind.

51. **I'll . . . more:** how short-lived are all his fits of remorse and terror is again shown here, and will again be shown later on, more than once; here, only a short while after saying this, he not only goes there again, but commits two more calculated murders; he says he cannot do things, but he does them, she says she will do things, but she cannot do them.

54. Scan : Give me" | thè daggers | thè sleep | ing' and ; thè déad : first foot doubly stressed, "daggers" one syllable, fourth foot unstressed, its stress going to double that on the first.

56. **painted devil:** the devil in a picture is not formidable to look upon, as the devil "in the flesh" is.

57, 58. **gild . . . guilt:** this ghastly punning is due to a callousness forced in the presence of her husband, and is meant to shame him; blood cannot be said to "gild" unless gold is said to be "red"; but "red" (like "lal" still in Indian vernaculars) was once used generally for all bright colours.

61-64. Macbeth says that all the waters of the ocean will not wash his hands clean, but that the blood on them will, on the contrary, dye all those waters into a bloody red; Lady Macbeth says (ll. 68, 69) that a little water will do to wash their hands clean. Contrast what both say here with what happens afterwards—Macbeth wades into an ocean of blood that his own hands have created, and Lady Macbeth cannot wash hers clean of the stain left on them by this single deed of blood.

61. This sentiment is found in many Greek and Latin poets, and two passages in Seneca's plays have been pointed out. There was an English translation of these plays, made in 1581; but there is no need to think that Shakespeare was indebted to it.

63. **multitudinous seas:** (1) the multitude of seas, all the seas on the face of the earth; incorrect meanings given



are (2) seas swarming with life, (3) seas with their myriads of waves—incorrect, because both give characteristics of the seas that are irrelevant here. **incarnadine**: dye red.

64. Turning the natural colour of ocean water, a glass-green, into one of a uniform blood-red. **one**: (an adverb) throughout, not in mere patches of red; it is a most feeble way to take "one" to be an adjective, as if "green one" means "green sea". Scan : Máking | thè gréen | óne réd : first foot trochée, third foot spondee.

69. **it**: the clearing ourselves of the deed. **Constancy**: firmness of mind.

70. **Hath . . . unattended**: has deserted you.

71. **nightgown**: dress worn in bed—so that they might seem to those who would be admitted, to have just left their beds. **lest . . . us**: if we have to appear before them.

72. **show . . . watchers**: prove that we have been awake and out of bed.

73. **So poorly**: to look so like a craven.

74. To know, as we do, *what* has been done, it would be best not to know *who* has done it. **know**: not to be "lost in my thoughts" (ll. 72, 73). **not . . . myself**: to be lost to myself; not to know that it was I, Macbeth, Glamis, Cawdor (ll. 43, 44) who had done the deed.

74, 75. What is the tone, what is the frame of mind, in which this is uttered? They are not, as some critics take it, those of despair, her last words and the buoyancy of his own evil nature, have reacted on his despair and his hang-dog looks of a few minutes ago, and the tone of voice and frame of mind are those of a cynical flippancy which is a half-way house to the self-possession of perfect hypocrisy before the assembled guests, that follows a few minutes later, and that itself is followed by another crime (a cold-blooded double murder) in a few minutes more.

### SCENE 3

Besides the general reasons stated in the *Introduction*, there are particular reasons, both showing that this



Porter-Scene is a necessary part of the Action, and not an irrelevant interpolation; they are:—(1) it gives time to the two to wash their hands &c.; (2) it relieves the reader's tension of mind due to the murder-scene—a tension bound to be renewed by the discovery-scene; (3) it shuts up the deed within the castle-door for a while, before it is released and flies out to all the world; (4) it shows that castle to be a hell; (5) it shows the very different effects the knocking has upon the innocent and upon the guilty—making the former crack jokes upon it, and the latter quake with fear at it, though this fear passes off; (6) it makes us, the readers, forget, for a short while, the horror of the deed in the ribaldry of the talk.

2, 3. **hell-gate**: an unconsciously apposite word; the castle was at the moment, a very hell indeed. **old...key**: he would have constant work in opening the door (to let in the callers for admission), and shutting it. **old**: the unending monotony of the act is meant by this colloquialism, cf. "old swearing", "old abusing" &c.

4. **Beelzebub**: prince of devils and master of that house (i.e., of hell)—as we know Macbeth is of this house.

5. **farmer**: see *Introduction*, I. We can see an application, that the speaker does not, to Macbeth again—Macbeth too is "hanging" himself, is sealing his doom.

6. **napkins**: to wipe off the perspiration.

9. **other devil's name**: the porter's small stock of scripture names for the devil is exhausted; though he does not know the other name, we know it—it is "Macbeth".  
**equivocator**: (1) a Jesuit; (2) a perjurer in a law court. See *Introduction*, I.

11, 12. **for God's sake**: (1) because the Jesuits held the doctrine of "mental reservation", which, like their other doctrines, prompted their words and actions "for the greater glory of God"; (2) because the perjurer had sworn on the Bible to tell the truth. We again see an application to Macbeth, who equivocated between doing and not-doing; and to the witches, who equivocated to his undoing. **committed treason**: so had Macbeth. **could not...heaven**: could not

find his way to heaven by equivocation, but found that it led him to hell, though it had enabled him to make his way on earth for a time.

13. These repeated knockings of course came from the same persons outside.

15. **tailor**: tailors were a standing butt for jokes in literature; we can force an application to Macbeth, who steals the crown, like king Claudius in *Hamlet*, and then robs his subjects, rich and poor.

15, 16. **French hose**: were of two kinds, wide and narrow; and as the tailor managed to steal cloth out of both, so did Macbeth rob the rich and poor alike; we hear of his avarice and rapacity afterwards.

17. **goose**: flat iron for pressing clothes, with a handle shaped so; the tailor had already provided "cabbage" (as the stolen cloth was called) for his roast "goose" (pun).

18, 19. **too cold**: being now more than half-awake, he begins to feel the cold.

21. **primrose way**: pleasant road, strewn with enjoyments on earth. **bonfire**: the eternal fires of hell; either as punishment, like the burning of heretics by the Inquisition, or, ironically, as enjoyments, like the rejoicings shown by lighting bonfires.

1-21. Thus does this drunken, drowsy creature unconsciously moralize on his master's actions, and pass judgment on him: King (to be) Macbeth, a criminal, condemned by a judge, his menial servant!

22, 23. **Anon . . . porter**: coming, coming, please don't forget the poor porter's buksheesh; being now wide awake, he has recourse to his habitual whine for a tip, as he lets in the visitors.

24-39. Commonplace talk on indifferent matters succeeds;

40-49. and leads to talk on fearful omens of impending disaster, seen in the heavens (l. 42), and on the earth (l. 46).

26, 27. **second cock**: this was the vague way of reckoning time among the ignorant classes; it has been variously taken to be 3 o'clock or 6 o'clock; it is quite immaterial which it is.

36. **physics**: cures, makes us not to feel. Unconscious irony: Macduff, in all the innocence of conventional politeness, says that he is troubling Macbeth to show him the way to the king's chamber, but that he is sure Macbeth will look upon such trouble as a pleasure; Macbeth, with perfect hypocrisy, replies that such trouble *is* a pleasure. There is no reference here to the trouble of entertaining the king, as critics take it; for here it is irrelevant, pointless; the point being the change from innocent anticipation to the horror of the reality in store; the pleasure is the *pleasure* (!) of showing the way to the place where 'e knows his ghastly handiwork lies.

37. **to**: as to.

38. **limited**: specially appointed, privileged.

44. **combustion**: tumult, overthrow; in astrology, the occultation of a star behind the sun was called its "combustion"—its burning up—in the sun's fire. **confus'd events**: destructive calamities. **confus'd**: confusing (old meaning), destroying.

45. **new hatch'd**: secretly planned ("hatched"), and now about to be disclosed ("new"); a comic explanation given is that birds of ill omen (like owls) were lately "hatched in uncommon numbers", to predict this event. **to**: brought forth by. **obscure**: (a trochee) that flies by night.

50. **Tongue**: join with "name". **heart**: join with "conceive".

51. **thee**: the horrid deed.

52. **confusion**: destruction, ruin, the hand of murder. **masterpiece**: worst deed; because it is the murder of a king, whose life and person were sacred.

54. **The...temple**: the body of the king, the sacred person of the Lord's anointed. In the Jewish theocracy, the prophet of the Lord anointed the king of Israel in His name: hence the idea of the "divine right" of kings, and the use of the word "sacrilegious" above.



55. **The life:** the king's life. **the building:** the king's body. **the life:** Macbeth pretends not to understand *whose* life is meant; Lennox, ever alert, asks that question directly (l. 56).

58. **Gorgon:** in Greek mythology, the gorgon Medusa; her severed head, placed on Pallas's (Minerva's) shield, turned into stone all who looked on it.

**S.D. Exeunt Macbeth and Lennox:** Lennox, with a mind always looking for proofs, wants to see for himself the truth of what Macduff has said; for doing so, critics, who misunderstand his character, have called him a Paul Pry!

62. **downy:** placid, as on a bed of soft down.

64. **great...image:** the death of the king that almost resembles in horror the *general* death of all the living on the day of Judgment, in this that the king's death presages the death of us all. Macduff at once suspects Macbeth, in whose house, and therefore in whose power, they all now are.

65. **as...graves:** as if you too had all been already murdered.

66. **countenance:** be in keeping with this horrid sight, as ghosts, risen from the dead, and come to look upon that sight of death.

69-72. Macduff, whose intuition had at once suspected Macbeth, has yet no suspicion of Lady Macbeth's complicity with him; and with misplaced delicacy of mind, he fears that even breathing the word "murder" into her ear, might kill her. **fell:** the very word as it was uttered, would kill like the stroke of a sword.

73, 74. Her first cry, if she had been innocent, would have been "What! murdered?". But she knows that fact, avoids using that word, and turns off to something else—the good reputation of her house, and her concern for it—as if it would not matter so much, if the murder were committed in any one else's house. Banquo takes her up sharp at once. **Too...where:** it would be a cruel deed, wherever done.

77-82. In this hypocritical moralizing in general terms and metaphorical images, he never once directly refers to the

dead king; with the washing of the blood off his hands (with a little water, and not the whole ocean), Macbeth has as easily washed the short-lived remorse off his mind, and is himself again—hypocrisy trying to cover up the tracks of crime.

77. **chance**: occurrence, lit. what has befallen.

79. **nothing serious**: all is a jest in human life ("and in human death", he might have mentally added). **mortality**: (1) mortal man's life; (2) this earth in which mortal man lives.

80. **all...toys**: all things on earth are trifles; human life is a trifle (he might have added, "and human death too; and murder is a jest and a toy"). **renown and grace**: a roundabout reference, in abstract terms, to the king. **is**: singular verb to a plural nominative, when the plural, in sense, amounts to a singular.

81. **the...life**: the king's life-blood. **mere less**: the king's dead body; but there is a further application: the king himself is the precious wine of life: his nobles, now kingless, are the lees of that wine now drawn off; he is taken away, and we, his worthless courtiers (including the speaker's humble self), are left alive.

82. **vault**: wine-cellar, this earth, this "mortality" (l. 79).

83. **you are**: things have gone wrong for *you*.

Scan: What is | amiss | you are: first and third, trochees.

84-86. Roundabout language again from Macbeth; the truth, in plain words, from Macduff.

87-92. Lennox is slow to suspect, confines himself to evidence before him, and suspends judgment till the evidence is complete.

87. **as it seem'd**: when we visited the room.

88. **badged**: marked; this is taken as an evidence pointing to their guilt.

91. **distracted**: as men waking after having been drugged, and seeing the bloody sight, would naturally be; but it could also be because they were guilty. After placing the evidence of his own eyes before those present, Lennox pauses, looking open-eyed at them; the deficient metre (l. 92) indicates this pause.



93, 94. The moment Lennox witnessed these damning proofs, Macbeth's hand laid them dead.

94. A quick, penetrating question from Macduff; his suspicion is gathering strength, and it cannot escape Macbeth's notice; we may surmise that from now he marks him down for his future attentions, after Banquo.

95-105. He has a ready reply:—Reason told me I should not have killed them outright, but that I should have reserved them to be dealt with by the arm of the law; but Oh! my love for my king made me quite forget all reason; and the sight before me—here, the beloved king lying murdered; there, his murderers, red with the proofs of guilt on them—drove me into a frenzy, such as only he can be driven into, who has a heart to love and a hand to avenge. This nauseating hypocrisy has been, by Macbeth's admirers, called a "perfect defence" of himself.

97. **expedition**: haste.

98. **pauser**: slow, deliberating.

99. **silver . . . golden**: one word suggests the other, and both are glaringly forced in their application; "silver hair" might have been apposite; a white robe edged with gold lace, is a frigidly artificial fancy.

100. **breach . . . nature**: breach effected in the natural fortress of the human body (within which life shelters itself).

101. **entrance**: the daggers that inflicted the wounds were the storming party, forcing its way through this breach.

102. **colours**: the liveries of the Trade Guilds suggested this.

103. **Unmannerly breech'd**: indecently covered or dressed; the proper, decent dress (or covering) for a dagger is a sheath; these daggers, all covered with blood, are in a most improper, indecent dress; men put on breeches, and daggers put on sheaths, for decency's sake; these blood-stained daggers shock all decency! So says Macbeth, shocked; and so were those critics shocked, who tried to restore the text to decency by emendations like "unmanly drenched", "unmanly reeched"

&c, or by decently explaining "breeched" to mean "up to the hilt", on the remote analogy of the breech of a cannon. They were wrong; for Macbeth's speeches hereabout are, all of them, full of affected artificialities, that show his affected, artificial grief; and these affectations reach the anti-climax of the ridiculous in these two words, and the picture they present; they expose his hypocrisy, and force a contemptuous laugh from us, in the middle of this awful scene. Shakespeare often likes thus to try the strength of his power over our emotions, by daringly putting the comic into the midst of the tragic, without in the least impairing the terror produced in us by the tragic—making us laugh, even when we are quaking with fear. What other dramatist has attempted this daring feat, and has succeeded?

105. **Courage:** this was once fancied to be seated in the heart, literally: Lat. *cor*, heart. **make's:** make his. **Help me hence:** Is Lady Macbeth actually going to faint, or is she merely pretending to do so? (1) She pretends: the proofs are:—that Macbeth takes no notice of her—he understands that it is not a faint, but a *feint*; that she keeps up appearances—for, to faint, or to pretend to do so (if she really cannot faint) is what decorum requires of a lady; that she makes a noise to attract attention to her performance. This is a mistaken view, shallow, cynical, belied by the whole course of her words and actions to the end, and so, misunderstanding her character. (2) She really faints: she had planned the details of the king's murder, but her limited imagination had never been able to picture to her the scene of the victim lying dead, till now, when it is described by the murderer; she had planned that by merely smearing them with Duncan's blood, the guilt should be made to fall on the grooms, but she had not imagination enough to suggest to her that their *murder* might ever follow on the execution of her plan: that picture and this undreamt-of sequel are too much for her; her nerves give way, and this fainting is the first indication of that strain upon her mind that never ceases, but ever grows, till it ends in her death; this growth will be traced as the Action proceeds,

till that consistency of character that view (1) violates, will be established.

106. Macduff's attention to her, and Banquo's in l. 112, show that neither suspects her as yet.

107. argument for ours: subject that so closely concerns us.

108. should: possibly can.

109. Where murder may be lurking for us in places where we least suspect it can hide; in the *Arabian Nights*, a colossal ginn issues from the mouth of a small bottle, when uncorked, and falls upon a poor, astonished merchant.

111. Scan: Our tears: a trochee. our: emphatic; we, whose grief is the deepest, are the slowest to give expression to it; those whose grief lies on the surface, are the readiest to express it; the two sons have penetration enough to see through the demonstrative grief of their host and hostess.

111, 112. Our grief dare not yet give expression to itself; this is not the time or place to shed our tears and give vent to our sorrow; we have first to think of our own safety. The younger son spoke sarcastically against the pretended grief of others, the elder speaks prudently about what should be done, before they can indulge in their own grief with safety.

113. The guests who had lodged in the castle appeared in their night-dress; those who had knocked were dressed.

114-119. Banquo has observed everything, spoken very little, and now, with that wisdom that ever acts with safety, takes the lead; he proposes the holding of a court of enquiry into this yet not fully explained tragedy, and places himself under the guidance of God, as the upholder of justice against treason; he knows more of what has gone before than any of the thanes present among the guests, and has stronger suspicions, therefore, than any of them; but he has given no signs of what they are, for that would be dangerous to them, and fruitless of redress, as long as they are in that castle.

115. question: enquire into.

118. **undivulged pretence**: design as yet not clear; Banquo carefully avoids saying "worker" (l.115) or "pretender", and only says "work" and "pretence". **pretence**: an iambic.

120. **briefly**: quickly. **manly readiness**: not merely clothing and armour on their bodies, but also minds steeled to meet malice and treason boldly and promptly.

122. **them**: Malcolm is cautious; he names no names, and uses the safe plural.

127, 128. Donalbain also suspects the king's first cousin, Macbeth. **near**: nearer; the older and more correct comparative of "nigh". **nearer bloody**: the more likely to thirst for our blood.

128, 129. This murderous arrow has not yet spent itself and lighted on the ground; but, after striking down one, it is still flying through the air, and means to strike down the two others—having been shot with the intention to strike down all three in succession.

131. **dainty of**: particular about.

132. **warrant**: justification.

133. **itself**: supply "away".

#### SCENE 4

Hitherto the consternation has been confined to those within the castle; it now spreads abroad, and, as it spreads, gathers round itself rumours and prodigies, one more wonderful than another.

2. **volume**: (1) space, compass; (2) his life, which is a book of seventy pages and more!

4. **trifled**: reduced to a trifle. **knowings**: (plural) several occasions that I have known.

5. **heavens**: sky, threatening the guilty earth with darkness.

6. **bloody stage**: the earth, as a blood-stained theatre, in which man is the chief actor in bloodshed.

7. **travelling lamp**: (1) sun as it travels through the sky on its daily round; with a play on the older spelling and

meaning of "travel"—"travail"; (2) with or without the reading. **travailing**: sun that labours through, and struggles with, the darkness.

8. **predominance**: rule, supremacy; an astrological term, applied properly to the stars; is the night unduly prolonging itself? **day's shame**: or is the day unduly delaying itself? Are night and darkness forcibly keeping the day back, or are day and light ashamed to show their faces, and keeping themselves back? This is Ross's euphuistic conceit.

10. **living**: life-giving; opposed to **entomb** (l. 9) : bring death.

12. **towering**: hovering at the highest point it meant to soar to, before pouncing down on its prey. **pride of place**: this highest point that gives it the greatest advantage in impetus downwards in its pounce.

13. **mousing**: usually flying close to the ground for its prey, such as mice; the prodigy is that the owl towered higher than the hawk, and pounced down on it!

14. In scanning, "*horses*" and "*certain*" are accented monosyllables, pronounced as "*hors*" and "*cert*" **and** : and yet.

15. **minions . . . race**: (1) finest of the equine race, the best horses in the world; (2) finest of their breed, the best of Scotch-bred horses. (1) is preferable, because of the exaggeration, which Ross, we know, is fond of.

16. **nature**: their nature.

17. **as**: as if.

18. **war . . . mankind**: they tried to tear their grooms to pieces; another bit of flowery exaggeration, **mankind** meaning only the grooms or others they met in their wild career. **'Tis said**: I have heard people say; this is mere hearsay.

20. **look'd upon't**: as I saw it with my own eyes; this is proof at first hand; exaggeration of fact or in language can go no further; the old man is posed, and the prize for the tallest talk goes to young Ross! Pathos, however, underlies this comedy: it was supernatural instinct that made the



horses aware of their master's fate, and love for him that drove them mad.

All these prodigies (ll. 5-20) are faithfully narrated by Holinshed.

23-27. Macduff says so, for he is still within Macbeth's reach and in his power, and he knows that Macbeth is now king by election of the thanes; he therefore states the conclusions arrived at by the court of enquiry, at whose sitting the flight of the two princes had strengthened the evidence of what Lennox had seen and reported; but he keeps his own private opinion to himself; what that is we can guess from ll. 37, 38, where he declines to attend the coronation ceremony, and from III, iv, 128, where we hear of his refusal to attend the coronation banquet.

24. **pretend**: hold forth as resulting.

27. '**G**ainst . . . **s**till: Ross's credulous mind sees only a further prodigy in this conduct of the sons—the earth, the elements, the brute world of bird and beast, and now human nature—sons against father—all act unnaturally.

28. **thriftless**: prodigal; ambition seeking to gratify itself at the reckless cost of parricide. **ravin up**: snatch up, destroy.

31. This was another resolution arrived at at that meeting of the thanes, after Macbeth had been officially exonerated from the very shadow of a suspicion. **Scone**: near Perth, the capital of the ancient Pictish kings of Scotland; upon a stone (supposed to be that on which Jacob slept, *vide* Old Testament) in the Abbey, the Scottish kings used to be crowned; this stone is now in Westminster Abbey.

33. **Colme-kill**: the *cell* of St. Columba; this is the island of Iona, one of the Western Isles: it was the burial-place ("storehouse", l. 34) of former kings of Scotland. Holinshed gives 1046 as the date of this burial.

36. **to Fife**: Macduff retires to his own stronghold, Fife Castle, for safety, as he will not trust himself again with Macbeth, by attending either the coronation ceremony or the state banquet. **thither**: to Scone; Ross takes things as they come, loyal to the late king, loyal to the present king,



and like Barney Maguire, is going to see the grand *tamasha* of the coronation.

37, 38. A hint of suspicion, given cautiously :—I hope you will witness nothing untoward *there*, lest we regret the loss of what we enjoyed under the old reign, more than we rejoice in anything we are likely to enjoy under the new reign. **old robes**: such as safety, honour, happiness, that we enjoyed under Duncan; the metaphor is suggested by the coronation robes that will be worn at the forthcoming ceremony. **adieu**: farewell, lest I never see you again, which will be the case, if the new reign turns out to be what I fear it will; in fact, he never sees him again in Scotland, and he seems to have a presentiment of it.

40. **benison**: benediction; so “malison”, malediction.

41 Those who try to make the best of things; “whatever has happened, has happened”; the old man too has his suspicions in his own feeble way, but he would rather that he had them not; and he hopes, in his resigned way, that good will come out of evil. This acceptance of what is an accomplished fact by this old man represents the frame of mind among the masses of the churls; as Ross’s acceptance of it represents that among many of the upper classes; any hopes that either class of these optimists have, will soon begin to fade away, and end in universal execration.

## ACT III

### SCENE 1

The Coronation is over, and Macbeth, now king, gives a State Banquet at his castle, now the palace. The details of the proceedings either at the Election Meeting or at the Coronation Ceremonies, apart from the mere facts of the two, have no bearing upon the Action, and therefore have no place in it. If they had, what a report on the former could Banquo have given, or what a picture of the latter



could Ross have painted! With what eagerness would an inferior artist have seized upon the golden chance to spin the details of both out, irrelevant as they are! Old Chaucer, true poet, knew when such details were irrelevant, but, true humorist too, he slyly got in the whole description of a feast, by prefacing every detail about every dish with "I need not tell you about this", or "about that", or "about how". But in a play this ruse would not do.

1-10. Fortune has placed Macbeth above Banquo; but Nature made Banquo the nobler man. He despises the other for his foul play; the other fears him lest he might practise it himself against him.

1, 3, 4. **it**: the crown. **stand**: remain.

7. **shine**: with the light of fulfilment; are shown to be true (in your case).

8. **verities . . . good**: predictions verified in your case.

10. Banquo also then has his ambition, and never conceals it, and if he had none, after hearing such a prediction about his issue, we would have despised him; but in his mind ambition cannot give birth to the thought of *crime* for attaining the object, as it has done in Macbeth's; this is why he prayed to God, when the witches predicted to him; prayed to God, when Macbeth tempted him; placed himself in the hands of God, when Macbeth committed the crime; on every one of which occasions Macbeth placed himself in the hands of the devil and his agents.

13. **all-thing**: in every way.

14. **solemn**: ceremonial, of state; often in Elizabethan writers, this word has no reference to religious rites.

17. **indissoluble**: accent on—ú.

19. This enquiry and those in ll. 23, 35, are made quite casually, in the course of other talk; they serve cunningly to draw information material to his plans.

21. **still**: always. **grave**: weighty. **prosperous**: turning out well for me.

22. **take**: fix on, put off till.

25. **go . . . better**: if my horse goes slower than I expect.—



27. **Fail...feast**: Banquo does *not* fail at the feast! The callous hypocrisy of the request, the unsuspecting readiness of the promise, the terrifying fulfilment of it, that neither dreamt of—what deep meanings lie hidden under these few words of commonplace talk!

29. **are bestow'd**: have betaken themselves.

32. **strange invention**: absurd stories as to *who* the murderer of Duncan is; says the innocent Macbeth, in injured tones—"I will not allow such stories to go unchallenged; I will draw attention to them at tomorrow's council meeting; and I beg of you, my chief councillor, to be present at it". Macbeth knows that Banquo more than suspects the truth as to who the murderer is; and while uttering this piece of hypocrisy, the crafty liar watches Banquo's face to see if it betrays his private thoughts about the official lie, that had been issued under all the authority of the court of enquiry that Banquo himself had proposed to be convened; he knows also, with a cynical certainty, that Banquo, whom he so much presses to attend the next day's council meeting, will, thanks to his precautions, never be able to attend it.

33. **therewithal**: besides. **cause**: affairs.

34. **Craving**: requiring your and my joint attention.

36. **our...upon's**: it is time for me to set out. **upon's**: upon us.

38. **commend...backs**: I wish you a pleasant ride; "commend" was often so used to a person taking his leave.

14-39. In this conversation, Macbeth's main object is to get information about Banquo's movements, which he does through seemingly casual enquiries; his second object is to remove any suspicion in Banquo's mind that he, Banquo, occupies his, Macbeth's, thoughts, by making him believe that the two sons of Duncan wholly occupy his thoughts and suspicions.

42. **keep ourself**: keep to myself, retire.

43. **while**: till. **God...you**: a dissyllable in scanning, like its contraction "good-bye".



47-71. Macbeth has done much to become king; but now that he *is* king, he discovers that *to be* king is nothing, unless much more is done *to be safe* as king: "And I am not safe as long as Banquo is alive; his superior nature makes me feel that I am his inferior, though by title I am his king; and it makes him feel that he should be king by title, as he already is by nature; and to become this, he may do as I have done—he *may murder* me, as I have murdered Duncan; he has courage enough to do this, but he has wisdom enough not to do this, until he can *safely* do it. He rebuked the witches when they called him "king to be"; and then they called his issue "kings to be"; thus am I king, only to pave the way for his issue to be kings; for them, not for my own issue, have I paid so dear a price for this kingship—loss of honour among men, loss of my soul to the devil; this must not be; while he is biding his time to strike me down, I must anticipate him by striking him down at once". He is as good as his word, and calls in the murderers at once.

We never again see Banquo alive meeting Macbeth: and the relations between them, from that election meeting to this parting here, may be explained, to clear his character from an attempt made to blacken it:—Banquo had stronger reasons than any one else to suspect Macbeth, because he knew more than any one else about him; why then did he remain silent all this while, why did he not expose him at the election meeting, how did he come after it to occupy so high a place in Macbeth's counsels as to be called his chief councillor by the king? It was, critics say, because Banquo was a "passive" traitor to King Duncan, was a coward for himself, was a passive supporter of Macbeth's cause, and a turncoat adherent to his fortunes in success. The answer is:—Banquo was no traitor to Duncan—his refusal to support Macbeth, if that support was to be at the cost of his loyalty to Duncan, proves this; he was no coward for himself—because exposure of Macbeth at the election table, in Macbeth's house and in his power, and with the "faked up" proofs ready to rebut an accusation against him, would be foolhardiness, not courage.

would not prevent Macbeth's election, and might cost him, Banquo, his life; and he was no supporter or adherent of Macbeth's, but occupied his high place only in virtue of his now being the " premier " thane of Scotland (as Macbeth had been under Duncan) and the " first " subject of its king : he was a loyal subject to that king elected by law, but only so long until he could prove that the election had been vitiated by crime; that " wisdom that guided his valour to act in safety", as his enemy himself said of him, led him to bide his time until he could act with effect; and Macbeth anticipated this by getting him assassinated before that time could come.

47. **thus**: a king, beset with fears for his safety.

48. **safely thus**: supply "is something", "is the thing".

48, 49. **our...deep**: my fears about what may be hatching in Banquo's mind, have taken deep root in my own; these fears are that Banquo is thinking of murdering Macbeth; and Macbeth's rule for quieting such fears is—" Do you fear a man ? Then murder him, and you are safe". Banquo has no thoughts such as these, we may be sure; but Macbeth judges of others by himself. **royalty of nature**: kingly nature; such a nature as is described in ll. 50-53.

50. **would be fear'd**: commands fear, makes itself feared.

51. **to**: added to.

54. **being** : existence. **under**: what a word for a king to use of one who is his subject !

55. **Genius**: inborn nature; among the Greeks and Romans, a man's genius was his tutelary deity, being a particle of the divine spirit imparted to him at his birth.

54-56. This is how his late chief in military command and now his king by title, speaks of Banquo, his superior by nature and in character, as he feels him to be. Shakespeare follows North's *Plutarch* in the Life of Antony; the Caesar meant is Angustus, then Octavius; Plutarch says " Your genius dreads his; when absent from him, yours is proud and brave; but in his presence, unmanly and dejected ".

60. **fruitless** : barren (l. 61); giving birth to no crown for son of mine.



62. **wrench'd**: Macbeth does not say "to descend to"; for he fears he will be *violently* deprived of crown and sceptre; he fears Banquo will murder him to assure the succession to his issue; this is why his "fears stick deep" in Banquo, ll. 48, 49.

**unlineal hand**: hand of one who is no descendant of mine.

64. **fil'd**: defiled.

65. **them**: emphatic, and repeated in ll. 67, 69; in all three places the rhythm must be altered so that the stress or accent falls on this word; here the fifth foot is | I` murd !, (—er'd) being hypermetric.

67. **eternal jewel**: soul; this sounds very pious; but it shows that he was willing to sell his soul for a good price, and that the price he has got by the sale falls below what he expected; "I have been fooled by the devil into making a bad bargain with him"; this is the extent of his piety. Scan :—

Only | fòr thém | —first foot, trochée.

69. Scan : Tò make | thém kin'gs | —first foot, pyrrhic; second, spondee.

70. **Fate**: you, Fate, who after being for me, have now turned round against me.

71. **champion me** : fight me; he challenges Fate, because of her decree in favour of Banquo's issue. He began his career by leaving his affairs in the hands of Fate who seemed to come forward as a friend; he proceeded in it by taking them into his own hands, with the devil as a new friend and ally; he ends here by openly breaking with Fate and turning his hand against her, and by being dissatisfied with his friend the devil; by and by, he will break with the devil also, as a false friend, a deceiver and a cheat. **to the utterance**: to the bitter end; a term in duelling; Fr. *à l'outrance*, to the extremity of death to one or the other; Lat. *ultra*, beyond.

**S. D. Enter two murderers**: this is how Macbeth "keeps himself till supper-time alone", to be able "to make society the sweeter welcome"—all alone with only two murderers! We



shall see also how sweet that society at supper-time turns out to be!

76. **he:** Banquo, of whom they had spoken "yesterday"; hence the pronoun without an antecedent.

78. **innocent self:** these men had been among the numerous victims of Macbeth's cruelty over the common people, but his cunning has succeeded in diverting their suspicions upon Banquo as their oppressor, and in establishing his own innocence in their eyes; and now, by a diabolical ingenuity, he succeeds in converting them into his agents against Banquo's life.

79. **probation:** proof of *who* your real oppressor was; this proof took some time to be given to them, apparently occupying the whole of that meeting.

80. **borne in hand:** deceived; a very common Elizabethan phrase. **instruments:** subordinate agents.

81. **who...them:** the chief agent who directed them.

82. **half a soul:** weak-minded man, **notion craz'd:** one deranged in mind, an idiot.

83. The whole of it was Banquo's work; if these words were "Thus did Macbeth", they would be telling the truth.

87. **let go:** overlook this. **so gospell'd:** such good Christians, such faithful followers of the Gospel, that tells us to love our enemies, and to pray for them that curse us; the cynical tone in which Macbeth speaks of religion is unmistakable.

89. **bow'd...grave:** broken down your spirits, so that life seems to you to be not worth living.

90. **beggar'd yours:** reduced *your* issue to beggary. **we are men:** we have the feelings of ordinary men; we are not Gospel saints; we love our friends and hate our enemies. This reply makes them advance half-way to meet Macbeth.

91-107. This, his rejoinder, makes them advance the rest of the way. After falsely got-up proofs, and cool-headed reasoning based on them, have done their part in bringing them so far, Macbeth employs sarcasm to spur them on over



the last lap : " You *say* you are men; true; but there are men and men, as there are dogs and dogs; if you are men worth the name, do something to show that you hate your enemies, as you *say* you hate them; I will put you in the way to do it; and by doing it, you will also show that you love your friends, as well; Banquo is your enemy; he is *my* enemy too.

91. **catalogue**: bare list of names only. **go**: pass.

93. **Shoughs**: shaggy dogs. **water-rugs**: rough-haired poodles. **clept**: called.

94. **valu'd file**: list giving both names and values; price-list.

95. **subtle**: keen-scented.

96. **house-keeper**: mastiff.

98. **clos'd**: enclosed, gifted him with.

99. **addition**: title, designation. **from**: join with "distinguishes", l. 95. **bill**: same meaning as "catalogue", l. 91.

101. **file**: same meaning as "file", l. 94.

102. **say't**: say so. **Scan**: N'ot i'the | wórst ránk | of  
mán | hood sày't | : four feet; the foot wanting indicates a pause, that is filled up by a silent look from Macbeth at them, before he proceeds to take them into his confidence, ll. 106, 107.

106. **in his life**: as long as he is alive.

107-114. And they take him, in return, into their confidence.

111. **tugg'd with**: buffeted by, pulled and hauled about by.

113. **on't**: of it.

115-138. Macbeth, now sure of his men, uses stronger and more direct language. He calls Banquo his enemy by that word, says he can get rid of him openly, and without their help, but he seeks their help, that it might be done secretly, for the sake of friends common to both, who must have no suspicion about him, and before whom he must seem to mourn his loss. He will give them directions shortly how to proceed; but one thing he must tell them now—they must not allow Fleance to escape.

115. **bloody distance**: (1) mortal enmity, deadly alienation; (2) deadly proximity, as of two swordsmen, so near



to each other that a thrust will kill; as ll. 116, 117 show, this is the better explanation.

116. **being**: life.

117. **near'st of life**: heart; every minute of his life is a sword-thrust at my heart.

118. **bare-fac'd**: open, undisguised exercise of.

119. **bid . . . it**: assert that it was my will and pleasure to do it.

121. **may**: can. **wail**: must wail.

122. **who**: whom.

126. His end gained, Macbeth cuts short further professions of devotion to him from them.

128. **advise**: inform, instruct.

129, 130. Another much discussed passage :—A reading that puts a colon (:) after "*yourselves*", and takes "*acquaint you*" to mean "*acquaint yourselves*" (imperative), thus making Macbeth keep the determination of the *place* in his own hands, and leave that of the time in theirs, may be at once rejected. All other interpretations have a comma (,) after "*yourselves*", and supply "*I will*" before "*acquaint you*"; these interpretations are :—(1) I will communicate to you information, secretly obtained ("*spy*"), of the exact ("*perfect*") time, for the deed ("*on't*"); here "*moment*" is in apposition with "*time*", and both mean the same thing; but the reading, with this interpretation, should be "*spy of the perfect time*". (2) I will communicate to you exact information, secretly obtained ("*perfect spy*"), of Banquo's successive movements ("*time*"), and of the moment for doing the deed ("*on't*"); here "*time*" and "*moment*" are co-ordinates, meaning different things; and the reading is as in the text; but the meaning given to "*time*" is a forced one. (3) I will communicate to you the exact time when you may expect to see Banquo coming ("*spy*"); here "*spy*" means "*espial*"; and the reading should be "*perfect time of the spy*". There is a hitch, therefore, in every interpretation; and we may leave the correct one to Macbeth and the murderers who understand one another, and the thing to be done, better than we do.



131, 132. And it must be done somewhat away from the palace; for you must never forget that I must be kept clear of any suspicion of being connected with it.

133. So as to round off the work quite smooth, by doing it once for all, not piece-meal—no patch-work, no rough work, that will need going over again.

135. Here and elsewhere, Macbeth is nice and euphuistic as to the words he employs, but he is always very downright as to the action they point to.

138. **resolve yourselves**: make up your minds.

141. Everything now settled and made sure, Macbeth's thoughts turn, in a sort of diabolical piety, to the safety of the soul of his victim; his thoughts turned so to the safety of Duncan's soul; the "if" here, and the "or" there, both show his sceptical views about the next world and should warn us against making so much, as some critics do, of the "Amen" that stuck in his throat.

## SCENE 2

2. **again**: back; so "returns again" is pleonastic, but this pleonasm is common in Elizabethan English.

3. Macbeth has not sought her advice in this matter of the Banquo murder plan; 1. 44 shows this. She wants to see him, for of late he has not come to see her; how different was it, when he flew to her, first in letters, then in person, when he was setting about the Duncan murder!

4. Scan: För à | few words | (pause) | Mådåm | I' will:  
first foot unstressed, second doubly stressed, fourth trochee,

Noúght's hád | a'll's spént: these four monosyllables, each doubly stressed, slowly uttered, with a deep sigh before uttering it, take the place of the full metre of five feet, or even of six.

4-7. Macbeth said the same thing (III, i. 47), but in how different a spirit!—"Nothing had by one murder; to have something, I must commit another murder" is what he said. "Nothing had, all spent" is what she says. "One



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murder only brought fear on me, another murder must rid me of this fear", he said. "Better to be dead and at peace, than to live in nothing but fear", she says.

5. **content**: happiness.

6. **be that**: be dead, and at peace, as those are whom we have killed.

7. **doubtful**: full of fear; a common meaning of "doubt" was "fear" in Elizabethan English; whence "redoubtable", causing fear, formidable.

8. **keep alone**: never see any one, never see me; this is true as far as she is concerned; she thinks he is like herself—alone with his brooding thoughts, as she is alone with hers; but, poor soul, she little knows what his thoughts have been, and what company he has just been keeping to give effect to them!

9. **sorriest**: saddest.

10. Brooding over those thoughts about Duncan's murder that remorse had brought forth. **using**: keeping company with, dwelling with; a meaning in Latin also. She judges of his state of mind from her own, and advises him to do what she herself cannot do—forget the past—little thinking that her advice falls very wide of the mark.

11. **all**: any.

12. **be . . . regard**: be dismissed from the mind; be not looked back upon (the literal meaning of "regard"; as also the meaning in French). **what's . . . done**: and cannot be undone. She thinks his mind, like hers, has been harping upon Duncan and the past; she little knows that his mind has been busy about Banquo and the future (as his reply shows).

13-26. What is done has only left still more to be done; and until that is done, I shall have to live in fear; rather than live so, I will see this world turned upside down; rather than live so, I prefer to die, and be among those that I have sent to death; Duncan have I sent to death, and him, dead, I put out of reach of the fears that crowd round me, living". This is as true a picture of the agonies of mind he has been suffering by himself, as it is of those his wife has been suffering also



by herself; and as we have pitied her, we would have pitied him too, had not his plan to relieve himself of them intervened to kill all pity for him.

13. **scotch'd the snake**: by killing Duncan, we have not put an end to all danger; for danger from a fresh source threatens us; we have cut off one head of this hydra of danger, only to make fresh heads come into life and threaten us.  
**scotch'd**: bruised; Folio: *scorched*; an older spelling of "scotch" was "scorch", though the words are of different derivations: "scorch" being from M. E. *scorchen*, to flay, O. Fr. *ecorcher*, to strip of bark, Lat. *excorticare*, *cortex*, bark; "scotch" being from M. E. *score*, mark, cut.

14. **close**: be healed, by the wound closing. **poor**: that has effected so little.

15. **former tooth**: the same power to wound as she had before.

16. **frame of things**: orderly structure of this universe.  
**disjoint**: disjointed; forms like *suspect*, *infect*, *hoist* &c., without the -ed, are derived directly from Latin participles in -*tus*, or on that analogy; forms with the -ed are from new English verbs formed from the Latin participles, or analogously. **both the worlds**: heaven and earth.

20. **peace**: secure enjoyment of power. **peace**: the peace of the grave. We hoped to gain happiness by gaining the throne, with nothing more to fear; we have missed that happiness, and gained "*torture*" instead (l. 21).

21. **to lie**: as on a rack of torture, instead of the bed of rest.

22. **ecstasy**: madness, mental alienation; Gk. *ekstasis*, a standing out of one's normal state of mind.

23-26. It was the bloody corpse of Duncan that we saw last; we see him once more now—peaceful, happy, free from the torture that now assails his living murderers. **fitful fever**: the restless changes in the evils that assail the living during all their lives.

24. My treason against him did the worst it could do to him, when it took away his life; but it can do, and has



done, worse to me, when it makes me live this life of haunting fears. **his: its. steel... poison:** we may well suppose that plots to assassinate Macbeth had been formed, and had been discovered by him, though none are directly mentioned in the play; such plots would be some of the new heads of the hydra that threaten him, and are the sources of his fears. His three greater works—his *opera majora*—in crime, and these only, are set forth at large in the play; but many minor works of this great artist in crime are, as here, just hinted at in a line or two; but the mere hints cast a lurid flash on them for a moment, and leave us much to think of long; among these thoughts are some about these many hydra heads that these infernal activities have given birth to, to threaten their parent.

25. **Malice... levy:** as they touched Duncan once—in Macdonwald's and Cawdor's rebellions ("malice domestic"), and in Sweno's invasion ("foreign levy"); and as they threaten Macbeth now—in the disaffection of Macduff and other discontented thanes, and in the preparations for an English invasion.

27. Macbeth never had that command over his features that Lady Macbeth had over hers to perfection; and his tell-tale face is now distorted at the thought of the coming murder, as it was on the occasion of the past one, and will be distorted again later on.

29. He says this, because her face too, impenetrable before others behind its mask of innocence, is careworn and haggard now that she is alone with him, this look helps him to an opening on the subject he has now most at heart.

30. **remembrance:** attentions; four syllables: rēmēm | bérānce |. **Banquo:** one syllable: tō Ban'q' |. **apply to:** apply itself to, be specially shown to. He now cautiously names his victim-to-be.

31. Distinguish him above the other guests with looks and words; of course, she would do this towards the first subject in the kingdom, without being told to do so; and, of course, he knows that, his plan succeeding, there would be no occasion for her to do so; his real object is to give her the



first hint of what he has planned without her help, without her knowledge, and to see how she takes it; this is one change in the relations between the two; the other is that the pupil now becomes the teacher! He repeats to her the lessons she had taught him about controlling the face and about "looking like the time". The pupil has made good progress and left the teacher behind!

32. The two feet wanting in the metre need not be due to "something having dropped out"; it indicates a pause after the "*we*", during which he reflects upon what he had hoped to be, and what he has come to.

32-35. We are not safe, as long as we have to dissemble before those whom we fear, and have to flatter them, our subjects, who should flatter us, their sovereign; we have befouled our honour, and we have to try to wash the foulness clean in the running stream of flattery; our hearts are black with foul designs, and to conceal them, we have to wear the mask of a fair, dissembling face. This flattery and dissimilation must be made to cease; and that can be done only by removing those who make them necessary. Here then are the thorns in King Macbeth's bed.

36. A cautious advance: the scorpions of fear are stinging his mind; and the two scorpions among them that sting the worst, are Banquo and Fleance, i.e. the fact that these two men are alive. These "scorpions" have been mistaken to mean the stings of remorse, of conscience; 1. 37 proves the mistake. **dear wife**: this has been seized upon as a proof of real affection on his part; it is really a hypocritical show of affection, through which he wants to find out if she will give him any encouragement, any approval, in this present undertaking. Shylock's calling Jessica "my girl" has been similarly seized upon as a proof of his real affection for his daughter, when his real object is to get round her to keep good watch over his house and its contents.

37. He comes a step nearer to the point, and names father and son, the two sharpest of the thorns (Note, II. 32-35) the two worst of the "Scorpions" (1. 36).



38. Lady Macbeth unwittingly helps him to come a step nearer still. **nature's copy**: a copyhold lease of life, held by all men from nature; all men are tenants on a terminable tenure, holding it from that universal landlord of human life—Nature. Lady Macbeth merely means to say "they cannot live for ever; they must die some day"; by this she means "they will die in the course of nature".

39. Macbeth takes her to mean "they can be made to die by a violent death"; this meaning suits his purpose, and he takes great comfort in her words, and thanks her effusively.

36-39. This ambiguity of meaning in her words raises the question—"Was Lady Macbeth aware of or suspicious of Macbeth's design upon Banquo, and did she by these words give her consent to or express her acquiescence in it?" Some critics answer "Yes", and make her a passive accessory to his second great crime, as she had been an active accomplice in the first. Others answer "No"; and they are right—her alarmed question in 1. 44, shows that she is in ignorance of his design; her moan in 11. 4-7 shows that one experience has been enough, and more than enough, for her in this kind of work; since that first deed, she has shrunk back from similar deeds, as steadily as Macbeth has advanced towards them.

39. **There's . . . yet; they . . . assailable**: the first sentence conveys his effusive thanks to his wife for her reply, the second sentence wrenches this reply into meaning, not what *she* meant, but what *he* wishes it to mean: "Thank you, thank you, for your words; if they are destined to die *some day*, I can make them die *any day* I like; if they can die, why! they can be murdered—can be made to die by being murdered".

40. Then cheer up; don't look so sad and downcast; in Duncan's case, it was she who had to cheer him up. How completely are the relations changed between them!

40-55. Just after he has matured one of his infernal designs, and obtained what backing he could from his wife, Macbeth's imagination takes one of its fine flights; stripped



of poetry, the ugly, naked truth stands thus—"Some one is going to be murdered this evening".

41. **cloister'd flight**: flying about in cloisters, where its prey is likely to be found. **black Hecate**: the beetle, because it flies out at night to feed, is, like the owl, the hedgehog, &c., pressed into the service of the powers of darkness and crime.

42. **shard-borne**: flying on sharded wings; "shards" are the hard, horny sheaths to the wings of beetles, which are therefrom called *coleoptera*, sheath-winged, in Zoology.

43, 44. **yawning peal**: the droning hum of beetles, that makes us, when we hear it, feel drowsy. **note**: import, meaning.

If this had been an opera, and Macbeth, the *tenore robusto* in it, he would have sung these lines to the guitar to his lady at the window; or had he been a Rabelaisian punster, he would have facetiously asked her to pronounce the syllables "*der*", "*mur*", quickly and repeatedly after each other, and see what word they sounded like; he is neither, but he is in a humour to trifle with her in the spirit of both, in this his second great undertaking—he, who reverenced her as his inspirer, in his first; this is the humour in which he calls her his "chuck", his "chickabiddy".

**what's . . . done**: she speaks in amazement and alarm, for now she suspects his meaning; of his arrangements with the two men, made before he came to see her, she knew nothing; in Duncan's case, it was she who had made the arrangements, and the two understood each other and worked together; in this case, she has not been admitted into the secret, and this is the first hint she receives of it.

45. **chuck**: my chicken; he treats his wife now as if she was a child, who is not to be told much of men's doings; so in l. 29, he calls her his "love", because he wants to coax her to do what he asks of her in l. 30. A critic sees in this word "chuck" an "echo of the days of the first love and mutual esteem of this heroic pair"!

46. **applaud the deed**: he is sure that she will think highly of this present exploit he has in hand, *after* it is done.



but he does not think it worth while to tell her more than what he has hinted to her, *before* it is done. **seeling**: closing up, blind-folding, the eyes; a term in falconry.

47. **scarf up**: cover up with a band.

49. **bond**: the "copy" of l. 38.

50. **thickens**: darkens; in physics, increasing density in fluids sometimes leads to increased opacity.

51. **rooky**: (1) full of his brother crows; (2) reekie, gloomy; Edinburgh is called Auld Reekie; needless difficulty is made over (1), because crows and rooks are different species of birds: rooks (or crows) fly to the rookery (or crowery, to invent a word to remove the difficulty).

54. **Thou marvell'st**: don't look so bewildered; since asking that question, she has been listening, with looks of terrified bewilderment, to this the latest of his poetic flights, for she well knows what such flights presage. **hold thee still**: don't tremble so: her nerves, that have been steadily getting unstrung since that fainting fit, make her tremble, as she sees his meaning.

55. A career of crime, once begun, has to gather strength by repetitions of crimes; here, then, is Macbeth getting stronger and stronger, and exhorting Lady Macbeth to do the same, while she is getting weaker and weaker—he, gaily marching on to fresh crimes, she, shrinking back after commission of the first.

56. **go**: come; as he says this, he supports her tottering steps and leads her out. Those who take l. 38 to mean that Lady Macbeth there suggests the murder of Banquo, should explain what meaning, other than that given above to ll. 54 and 56, they attach to them. Reader, recall the scene where Lady Macbeth said "Infirm of purpose!" to the trembling Macbeth, and snatched the two daggers from his nerveless hands; and place it by the side of this scene, where a *very different* Lady Macbeth trembles when she realizes that a second murder is afoot, and has to be held up by her husband from falling, unnerved, to the ground!



## SCENE 3

1. **But**: this, then, is a continuation of a talk.

2. Macbeth, with a cunning circumspection, had sent him to be a check on the other two (as a "spy", III, i, 129), and to make sure of Fleance.

3. **offices**: the work we have to carry out. **what... do**: the way we are to carry it out in; this third murderer, by one interpretation of III, i, 129, was the person meant to bring the instructions; these he imparted to them in the earlier part of their conversation.

4. **To... just**: exactly as we understood it was to be done, from Macbeth himself.

7. **timely**: in time.

9. **give**: spoken to the park-keeper at that gate.

10. **note of expectation**: list of guests expected.

11. **go about**: go by a longer bridle-path; father and son had dismounted, and were taking a short cut across on foot.

12-14. This shows that this third man is one of Macbeth's servants, familiar with the castle grounds and the ways of visitors to the castle.

14. **A light**: whispered, on seeing the torch one of the gate-keepers had given to Fleance.

16. **it**: the rain; these words accompany a *shower* of sword-cuts, rained on them.

18. **slave**: wretch.

19. **Was... way**: "was not this (the putting out of the light) part of our instructions?" It is this mistake that enables Fleance to escape in the dark; and it is thus that small incidents bring about great results, causing Macbeth's "best laid schemes to gang agley", and perhaps leading him from carefully planned single murders to indiscriminate slaughter of the obnoxious and the innocent together.

One critic gives eight numbered reasons to prove that the third murderer is Macbeth himself in disguise; another gives eight numbered answers to prove that they apply much better.



to Ross! Such are the pranks played with serious faces, under the name of Shakespeare criticism.

## SCENE 4

1. **degrees**: rank; the place at table used to be fixed by precedence in rank.

2. **a** : reading *the*; the customary.

3-5. He lays aside royal state, and plays the genial host, mixing affably with the guests.

6. **her welcome**: as hostess; at present, however, she sits as queen in her chair of state ("state"); by and by, she also will quit it, and act the charming hostess.

9. **encounter**: meet, respond to; the lords silently bow their thanks to the queen, to which he draws her attention with the word "*see*".

10. Both sides of the table have an equal number of guests; so I'll sit at the bottom, between the two rows; (instead of at the head, in his chair of state, beside the queen's).

11. **large**: free. **anon**: by and by; he has caught sight of the murderer, and puts off the guests, to go and hear what he has to say.

14. (1) reading "*he within*": 'tis better that his blood should be *outside* on your face, than that he should be *within* this room, alive and well; (2) reading "*him within*": 'tis better that his blood is *on* your face, than *in* his body; (3) reading "*thou without*": 'tis better that thou standest outside there, giving me this good news, than that he should be *within* this room alive and well.

17. This callous pleasantry shows how different a man he is now from what he once was, when the mere thought of murder upset him (I, iii, 135 &c.); whereas now he is in high spirits at the news of a murder successfully carried out.

19. **non-pareil**: just now he was the "best" of murderers, but now he will be "better than the best", "the best without

a second", if only—and then out comes the other news that dashes his high spirits and fills him with terror.

20. Spoken in slow, abject tones, followed by a pause.

21. **fit:** paroxysm of fear; fear shaking me from head to foot.

22. **Whole . . . marble:** entire, like an unbroken statue of marble. **founded:** firm, unshakeable.

23. **broad and general:** like the air, all-pervading and blowing as it likes: I was free to come and go or stay wherever I liked. **casing:** enveloping everything, enveloped by nothing.

24. (1) The three participles are emphatic repetitions of the same idea—I am *completely cased in*; (2) they form a climax of narrower and narrower confinement till the narrowest is reached in "*bound in*", chained to, delivered over to as a prisoner.

25. **saucy:** insulting (me, their prisoner in chains). **doubts and fears:** (1) two words meaning the same idea; in older English "*doubt*" meant fear; (2) different meanings, as in modern English; in either case these are his jailors.

27. **trenched:** gaping; suggested by "ditch" above.

28. **to nature:** to life.

29. **worm:** snake; a frequent meaning in the plays, and also in Middle English.

32. **hear ourselves:** talk together.

33. **the cheer:** the customary ("the") toast, or drinking of healths. **is sold:** is no better than one supplied by an inn-keeper for money.

35. **'Tis:** that (conj.) it is.

36. At home, hunger is the best sauce at dinner, but when one dines out, pledging healths is the best sauce to appetite.

38. **wait on:** follow.

40. **had:** would have had. **country's . . . roof'd:** all the nobility of Scotland under one roof. It would be invidious here to mean Banquo alone by "honour".

41. **grac'd:** gracious.

42. **who:** whom. **challenge:** blame.

43. I would much rather blame him for not coming, than have to pity him for any accident he may have met with; at this hypocritical wish, the ghost enters, to save itself from the blame. In its terrifying appearances and disappearances the ghost behaves as a loyal subject would have done, answering every wish of its sovereign! To keep up the irony of this mock loyalty, the ghost had best be made to enter at the expression of the barefacedly sham concern for the absence of its original, after the word "*mischance*".

47. He has just caught sight of the ghost, which, throughout, is visible to him alone. It is enough to mention the fancy of critics that they take the ghost that enters here to be Duncan's, and the one that enters at l. 92 to be Banquo's, without going into the flimsy, irrelevant grounds on which they base it, in the face of the fact that the texts in both cases indicate the ghost to be Banquo's; it is worse; it is a cruel, desecrating criticism; for it is a cruel desecration to disturb Duncan (or his ghost,) in that peaceful rest in which we left him last, in III, ii, 22 &c.

48. Again, it is the alert mind of Lennox that makes him ask this question.

49. **which . . . this:** the ghost answers this question with a look and a nod at Macbeth, which mean a silent "You".

50. **Thou . . . it:** the others do not see that answer; but Macbeth sees and understands it: and he meets it with a wretched subterfuge, laying the deed on the hired assassins; but the company present who hear him, draw their own conclusions. Scan: Thóu canst | nót sáy | I' did | it név | èr sháke: first foot trochee, "thou" emphatic: "you cannot say what Duncan might have said"—this is the wretched quibble in his mind; third, trochee, "I" emphatic: "not I but some one else" is the continuation of that quibble. **I:** my hand. Macbeth is a master in the art of fathering his own crimes upon others, always with the righteous indignation of the innocent:—Duncan's murder he fathered on his sons and the grooms; his wronging of the two ex-soldiers, he fathered



upon Banquo; Banquo's murder he now fathers upon the two ex-soldiers, whom he hired to be the assassins.

53. She has been able to collect herself so far as to frame this lame excuse, that deceives no one.

55. **upon a thought**: quickly, in a moment.

57. **passion**: suffering, disorder.

58. All that Lady Macbeth, here and below, says to Macbeth, is said in an undertone; his replies are in loud, excited tones, that give the company who hear them, much to think.

60. **proper**: mere, downright.

61. **very**: mere, nothing but.

62. **This . . . dagger**: this is a vision like your vision of the dagger—all unreal. **air-drawn**: painted in the air.

63. **flaws**: gusts of passion.

64. **to**: compared to. **true fear**: fear for which there is a real cause. **well become**: well suit those who listen to such stories, to show.

66. **Authorize'd**: vouched for as being true; she would say that the story must be true, on the strength of her having heard it from her grandmother's own lips—a very feeble ground, indeed, is an old woman's voucher! **shame itself**: downright shame.

67. She sees his distorted countenance, but not the ghost that is the cause of it.

68. **but a stool**: only an empty chair (on which the ghost, invisible to her, is sitting).

69-73. This is shrieked out in a paroxysm of terror.

72. **those . . . bury**: those that we know to be dead; the act of burial stands here for the general fact of death; but these words have been wrenched from this general into a literal meaning; and "because Banquo had not yet been buried, and Duncan had been, lo! it must be Duncan's, not Banquo's, ghost", says a critic, forgetting that death makes us the property of the grave, even before the grave has taken possession. **back**: join to "**send**", l. 71.

73. **maws of kites**: Macbeth as Ghost-layer! The remains of the dead should be flung to kites and crows (after being cut to pieces, perhaps) to be eaten, digested, excreted, and so dispersed by them, that they fly about from place to place; so that a man's ghost will have much ado to collect itself out of these *disjecta membra*! Whereas, if the dead are buried whole in a grave, a ghost can at once put on its visible shape, and come out to haunt us, the living! This is Macbeth's notable plan for preventing ghosts from haunting us. Again, in the midst of tragic horror we have this bit of comedy, to give us the relief of a laugh.

75-83. More comedy from Macbeth, who now as Professor of the Philosophy of Murder, expounds the theory of Humane Murder! or Murder done with kindness! Murders have always been committed, whether in lawless times, or under the reign of law; but always, too, when a man was murdered stone-dead, with a single blow, there was an end of it; but now, for the first time in the annals of murder, a dead man, murdered twenty times over with twenty blows, is seen to come back to life, and sit in a chair, and frighten a poor man, whom he mistakes for his murderer! This is the complaint of Macbeth, the most ill-used of humane murderers. Another mad man, Brutus (in *Julius Cæsar*), taught the theory and practice of Holy Murder.

75. **olden time**: primitive times of lawlessness among men.

76. (1) **gentle weal**: (Folio reading) before the mild humane reign of law purified the body politic of its savage cruelty, and *made it* gentle and merciful; a proleptic use, i.e., the adjective "gentle" follows upon, and does not precede the verb "purified", in their respective effects; (2) reading *general weal*: common-wealth, body-politic.

81. **twenty... crowns**: this is conclusive proof that the ghost was Banquo's.

82, 83. **this... is**: it is strange that any one should inflict twenty wounds to kill a man, when the very first wound was enough to have killed him ("mortal murder"); but it is still more strange that, after being killed twenty times

over by some one else, he should come back to life, come and sit in *my* chair, nod at *me*, shake his locks at *me—me*, an innocent man!" "*ki tajjub vyapar!*" Macbeth would have said, had he known Bengali. humane statute . . . gentle weal (l. 75) : it is wonderful to hear Macbeth talk of "humanity" and "gentleness"; it is savage and cruel to kill a man with twenty wounds; it would be humane and gentle to do it with one; he himself would commit only "humane murder", but these lawless ruffians (like prehistoric men) have committed a savage murder—inflicting twenty wounds where one would have done; it is not *his* fault that they have done so; and why on earth should he, the apostle of "humane murder", be terrified like this by the victim of an inhuman murder! "Indeed, that victim himself is most inhuman in thus terrifying a humane, *one-stroke* murderer like me". This is Macbeth's grievance; and this is a proof that he is full of the "milk of human kindness"!

84. **lack**: wait for, need, your attentions.

85. **muse**: wonder; their looks show their wonderment.

91. **Would . . . here**: the loyal ghost again at once complies with its king's unlucky wish for its appearance, as it complied before to remove his regret at his dear Banquo's absence. **to . . . thirst**: drink heartily to the health of all and of him.

92. **all to all**: (1) let all present "thirst to all"; (2) I wish all things to all persons, present and absent, i.e., I wish all happiness to all; (3) reading "*call*". I call upon all present to do the same as I have done, to one: another and to Banquo.

95. **speculation**: power of vision; your eyes are wide open, but they can see nothing.

101. **arm'd**: armoured; the thick hide-plates of the beast are meant. **Hyrcan tiger**: Shakespeare might have drawn his knowledge of this *habitat* of the tiger from Pliny's *Natural History* (of which an English translation existed); he never mentions the Bengal tiger, never having probably heard of it.

103. **be alive again**: what terror it must have been, that could drive him to this wish—Banquo to be alive again, after all that he had done to make himself safe from him by his death!

104. **desert**: where we two shall be alone and face to face.

105. A much emended passage:—(1) **If trembling I inhabit, then** (comma after "inhabit"): if I remain here like a coward, sheltered under a roof, surrounded by friends, and afraid of going forth alone into the desert to meet you. **then**: then protest me &c: (2) **If...inhabit then,** (comma after "then"): if I remain here &c. as in (1). **then**: after you have challenged me to meet you in the desert. (3) **If...I inhabit here**: if... I stay here. (4) **If...I inhibit, then**: (comma after "inhibit"): if... I refuse your challenge. **inhibit**: refuse, forbid. (5) **If...I inhibit thee**: if... I, your sovereign, through fear, forbid thee, my subject, to challenge me. (6) **If trembling me inhibit**: if fear prevents me; "trembling": a substantive here, a participle elsewhere. (7) **If...I inherit here**: I remain here. **inherit**: in the old sense of "possess", "dwell in". Wordsworth has "If... thou... inheritest the lion's den". In all cases, "me" after "protest" is hypermetric.

103-105. Macbeth's using the word "*tremble*" here is certainly a proof that he is *actually* trembling when he is speaking, at seeing the ghost—"I will not tremble before the living man, Banquo, if only he comes back to life", he says in despair.

106. **baby...girl**: (1) a girl's doll; an archaic meaning of "baby". (2) the weakling infant of a girl-mother.

107. **unreal**: unsubstantial, airy. **mockery**: delusion.

108. How quickly does he recover himself! There is, throughout, grim humour in the loyalty of the ghost in obeying each wish of the king for it to come or to go; and in the terror into which this unfailing obedience of the subject throws the sovereign.

109. **displaced**: broken up.



110. **admired**: admirable, i.e., strange. *admire* : wonder at; a very common archaic meaning, derived from that in Latin, *miror*, to wonder.

111. **overcome**: come over. **summer's cloud**: unexpected disconcerting sight that has thrown a gloom over the sunshine of the banqueting.

113. **disposition . . . owe**: (1) courage . . . possess. (2) constitution of my mind, "I thought I understood my mind very well, but now I wonder at it as something new to me" ("strange", l. 112); "I doubt whether I, Macbeth, am now the same Macbeth I once was".

115. **your**: (1) of the company. (2) Lady Macbeth's. It is not likely that all the company were alike unmoved, and all alike kept the natural colour of their faces; but it shows Lady Macbeth's perfect command of her countenance in the presence of company, even when her mind is near sinking: it sinks immediately after, when she is alone.

118. **At once**: she bids good night to all the company together; "at once" does not refer to time, nor mean "without delay".

119. **order . . . going**: order of precedence to be observed again on departing, as it had been at sitting down to table.

122. **it** : the victim's blood. **blood**: that of the perpetrator.

123. **stones**: under a heap of which the body of the murdered had been hidden. **trees**: at the foot of which it had been buried. There is no need to see reference here to Druidic "stones of judgment"; the bodies, thus hidden under stones or trees, would be exposed by wild carrion beasts digging them out, and the murderers could be traced by the clues thus afforded; Macbeth's heated imagination transforms this natural mode of exposure into the miraculous, and makes the stones to move *of themselves*, and the trees to speak with human voices, to bring the crime to light.

124. **understood relations**: hidden meanings, that augurs think they can detect in the actions of birds. **understood**: secret; "War, open or understood", *Paradise Lost*, i. 663.



125. **maggot pies**: a corruption of "margot-pies," magpies, "margot" is Margaret, Maggie; so too, Jenny Wren, Philip Sparrow, Poll Parrot; the birds in the text are all of prying and secretive habits, stealing things and hiding them; and so they are well fit to serve augurs as detectives.

126. **is**: is the time of.

127-144. Lady Macbeth bravely bore up as long as she was before the eyes of the guests; now that she is alone with her husband, she breaks down. Macbeth had given way to terror in unstrained extravagance of language and behaviour before them; and now, a few minutes after, is deliberately thinking of another murder!

127. She speaks with weariness in voice and manner, and in disjointed language. **at odds**: at variance. **which is which**: over the question whether the time can be called an hour of the morning or one of the night.

128. **How . . . thou**: (1) without comma after "thou": what do you think of this?—Macduff refused my invitation to the banquet. (2) with comma there: did you really mean to tell me that Macduff refused? (1) merely gives her that news, (2) tells a falsehood to make her draw that news for herself from it. **denies**: refused my invitation to the banquet.

129. This reply shows that she knew nothing, either about the invitation having been sent, or about its being refused.

130. **I hear . . . way**: I have indirectly heard that he refused. **but . . . send**: but I will send directly to him to ask for an explanation. By "send" 1. 129 Lady Macbeth meant "send an invitation"; his reply shows that he scarcely deigns to answer her question, but pursues the course of his own thoughts, though in her hearing—I have heard from my secret agents ("by the way") that he refused, and I will send to know why he refused. This is the third meeting of husband and wife, each before one of his three great murders; in the first he placed perfect confidence in her, guidance, in the second he made a show of placing confidence in her, when he talked about "scorpions" in his mind, and really treated her as one no longer fit to have his confidence; in this the third,



he does not keep up even that show, but almost ignores her presence, and leaves her to gather from his talk aloud to himself, what is in the air now.

131. He lets her know what again she was ignorant of—that he has a Secret Service Department, with its agents widespread over the kingdom. King Macbeth was the head of an organized Society for Assassination and Secret Murder; in history he had successors, who little knew of this their prototype in this very eleventh century, but later, the Old Man of the Mountain organized the Society of the Assassins; three centuries later, was organized the brotherhood of the Thugs.

133. And the right trusty witches are his Privy Council, of which Lady Macbeth has ceased to be a member.

135-138. Macbeth's Creed :—"I believe in the Devil; with the devil's aid, I believe in seeking my own good, and in pursuing it, at whatever cost to others; I have advanced halfway across the river of blood that my own hands have made to flow in this pursuit; I mean to advance across the other half to the other bank, where safety and the perfect attainment of my good await me." An "*Amen*" to this will not "stick in his throat"!

137. **wade no more**: cease to pursue this career of blood.

138. His mistake lies in thinking that this is a river with a further bank; he finds it to be an ocean without a further shore. **tedious**: there is not a thought in his mind about the *right* or the *wrong* of his course of action; his only thought about it is its tiresomeness :—which is less tiresome, going back or going on?

140. **scanned**: suspected by others; I must henceforth take my victims by surprise.

141. **season** : seasoning, refreshment that sleep brings. His dark hints call forth no response, of acquiescence or of dissent, from her; the partnership in crime, that had become inharmonious in the last transaction, is in the present one, completely dissolved.

142. **come....sleep:** who can resist thinking from this, that this Macbeth, who had once raved about "sleeping no more", has, since then, been a sound sleeper? And here he goes off to enjoy a good sleep, to refresh him for tomorrow's privy council meeting! **self-abuse:** this ghost like that dagger, was "no such thing"; and he dismisses it, as not worth a second thought.

143. **initiate fear:** fear that he feels who has just begun a career of crime; the fear of a novice. **hard use:** hardening through use and practice.

144. **young:** a novice; he thinks himself to be as yet a mere apprentice in the art of bloodshed! This is the last time that, in the play, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth ever see each other; henceforth between them the estrangement is complete; Macbeth never again, in the play, even mentions his wife, except when told that she is dead; to him she is dead *from now*. We shall see afterwards that this estrangement was not only in the matter of ambition, but also in that of conjugal fidelity: among the vices that Macbeth began to indulge in after his elevation to the throne was that of unbridled licentiousness; and among the crimes he committed to gratify his vices was that of the murder of outraged husbands, that he might possess their wives, (See IV. iii).

#### SCENE 5

Hecate is angry with the witches for having deal' with Macbeth without previously asking for her sanction; she now takes all business with him out of their hands into her own; and gives directions for getting ready the cauldron rites, in which she herself means to perform the essential rite.

3. **trade...traffic:** both words have the same meaning; namely to have dealings with, to have transactions with; the repetition means "to have *repeated* transactions with"; these transactions are described in 1. 4.

4. **riddles:** the predictions made in enigmatic language.



**affairs of death**: their incantations that sent forth the visionary dagger, and seated the ghost at the banquet.

6-9. Hecate finds fault with her subjects, not for engaging in evil works—for evil work is her own province too, in which she delights—but for engaging in them without her sanction. **close**: secret.

9. **glory...art**: full ceremonial pomp of witchcraft.

11. **wayward son**: my son who has taken the bit between his teeth, and is racing headlong to his own ruin. **son**: he is now a member of mother Hecate's family; the witches being her daughters, and own sisters to Macbeth; the Folio reading "wayward sisters" in I, iii, 33, though corrupt, finds an accidental parallel here.

13. **Loves**: corrupt Folio reading, to be emended to "**lives**"; Macbeth lives selfishly for his own sake, and cares nothing for you, his sisters, or for our family interest. Macbeth's own creed is turned against him here to his damnation, while he had fondly hoped it would work his salvation; he meant to seek "his own good" selfishly on earth among mankind at their expense; but his mother sees this selfishness in still blacker colours, because it is to the injury of the population of hell, and regardless of the greater glory (l. 9) of the powers of evil. There is much sound sense in Hecate's doggerel.

14. **make amends**: atone for your fault, (ll. 3, 4).

15. **pit**: cavern, **Acheron**: a river in Greek mythology, supposed to run partly underground, and to be the entrance to the Greek hell.

19. **and beside**: perhaps the feeblest words in this doggerel.

21. **dismal**: see note I, ii, 54. **fatal end**: his end is being prepared, just as he has resolved to wade the rest of his way to safety.

22. **noon**: midnight, which is the mid-day and noon of witches.

24. **profound**: (1) of deep virtue; this mystical meaning must be added to the mere physical one of (2) "heavy", and

therefore ready to drop of its own weight, unless caught in time by me.

26. **sleights**: arts.

27. **artificial**: produced by magic art, **sprites**; the apparitions that appear in the cauldron scene.

29. **confusion**: destruction; "confound", destroy; Cf. "O Lord ! in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded", *Prayer Book*.

31. **grace**: virtue.

32. **security**: his belief that he is safe. How pitifully small a figure does Macbeth cut here; the terror of all Scotland is the plaything of witchcraft! The witches tempted him and deceived him, their queen is going to undeceive him and punish him.

37. Hecate treats her subjects harshly though they are her own daughters; her subjects look on her with fear, and without love. The rulers of the two kingdoms, one on earth, the other in hell, are alike in this; but who will deny that Macbeth is a worse ruler than Hecate? One proof should be enough :—She and her agents helped Macbeth in his first and second crimes; they could not bear to help him in his third—the murder of an innocent mother and her little ones. Even the powers of Hell stop short and draw back from so black a crime as this!

#### SCENE 6

1-20. Macduff's intuition saw through things at a glance; Lennox's reason slowly put two and two together, till now at last it opens his eyes; he here gives us the conclusions he has come to; this he does in the language of veiled irony, because he cannot speak openly in the tyrant's house where he is now; and in that of sarcasm, in self-contempt at not having seen through things all this while.

1. **but hit**: only told you what was already in your mind.
2. **further**: further than any speech openly expresses.
3. **borne**: carried on.



4. **pitiéd of:** Macbeth therefore, must have been used to speak, to his brother thanes, of Duncan as the "poor king", as if in compassion for the weaker vessel; "But I now see" says Lennox "that Macbeth's pity kills". **marry:** by Mary, a mild form of oath, instead of "by God" **was:** the use of the same tense with "pitiéd" and "dead" is meant to show that death followed quickly as the result of the pity.

7. **fled:** as Malcolm and Donalbain had done. The reader can work out the *reductio ad absurdum* in each case by supplying the suppressed premiss.

8. **who...thought:** who cannot but think; we should now say "*who can want*"; for a negative is implied in "want" itself; and with us two negatives destroy each other; but it was not so in older English, and never has been in French; it is true that in Scotch idiom "*who cannot want a thing*" means who cannot be without the thing, who must have the thing; but Shakespeare is not using a Scotticism, but an Old English idiom, and one of his own times too. **monstrous:** three syllables. *mons-ter ous.*

10. **fact:** act.

12. **pious rage:** indignation, such as a son feels on behalf of a father; Macbeth took the place of Duncan's unnatural sons, and avenged his death! **pious:** filial. Aeneas is often so called in the *Aeneid* for his filial affection. **tear:** because of this word, which "is more the action of a wild beast", this line is said not to be Shakespeare's: it is his, because it shows the pretended "rage" with which Macbeth stabbed the supposed murderers, to impress Lennox, who witnessed the deed, with the strength of his loyal and "filial" regard; and which Lennox now discovers to have been a hypocritical pretence. **delinquents:** accent on second syllable.

16. **deny it:** which they would have done, if allowed to live.

19. **he shall not:** for the moment Lennox drops the bitter tone of irony and sarcasm, and speaks in solemn earnest.

21. **broad:** outspoken, unguarded.



23. **disgrace**: Macbeth, then, has "sent to him" as he said he would, in III, v, 130; and he will "send" again, as we shall see.

1-23. Lennox's mind has here taken a survey of all the evidence that it has been gathering up, and has set forth above.

24-39. This lord gives important news from England; he speaks out his mind, in plain language, of the state of things in Scotland, and of the hopes of remedy that this news holds out. There is no need to economize in lords, as critics do, by substituting Angus or Ross for this nameless lord, who never appears again; judging by their names the thanes *named* in the play were most of them from the north, and this nameless lord is more from the south, and therefore more likely to have got the earliest news of the English movements that he brings; apart from this, he is the representative of a class (as the Old Man was of a different one)—the class of the lairds or the *lesser thanes* (besides the greater ones named), who had felt Macbeth's heavy hand, or feared to feel it; hatred of Macbeth had spread wider and wider among *all classes*; and this nameless lord represents one of them.

24. **The son**: the eldest son.

25. **holds**: withdraws. **the due**: the throne that is his by right of birth; the right of primogeniture did not then exist in Scotland, however.

27. **Of**: by. **grace**: royal favour.

28. His misfortune has not lessened the respect due to him, as legitimate king of Scotland.

30. **holy King**: Edward the Confessor; he belonged to no order of priests or monks, and both titles only point to his reputed sanctity. **upon his aid**: with the object of aiding Malcolm.

31. The fighting men of Northumbria and their leader, Earl Siward.

32. (1) reading "**with Him above**": with God above; God himself would take up the good cause, and appoint King Edward to be his deputy on earth, against the cause of evil and



the powers of darkness; this would be a strong appeal to the godly-minded king. (2) reading "with him above": with King Edward to sanction the Earl's action; this is a feeble reading.

34. (1) That we may not be murdered as we sit at table or lie asleep in bed. (2) that we may not, by day, feel our food taste like poison, and, by night, get sleep, instead of being kept sleepless by fears.

35. **from**: in sense governs "*knives*".

36. **faithful**: sincere; not like the lip-service that we offer Macbeth. **free honours**: honours from a king who respects the freedom of his subjects, on whom he confers them; whereas honours from Macbeth are stringently coupled with slavery to his tyranny.

34-37. These are the "old robes" that they wore under Duncan, (II, iv, 38) for being stripped of which by Macbeth they now mourn.

37. **this report**: of Macduff's flight and of his activity at the English court.

39. **sent**: sent a royal command to Macduff to attend the king's court; this was the second "sending" that Macbeth sent to Macduff, (III, iv, 130).

40. **with**: on receiving. **not I**: Macduff's bluff reply to that second message was this refusal; for he knew well what would follow if he placed himself again within Macbeth's grasp. **absolute**: blunt refusal.

41. **cloudy**: with clouded brows. **me**: expresses surprise, "what do you think?"

42. **who**: one who.

43. **clogs**: burdens; the man not only guesses what this reply will cost him who gives it, but fears for himself, who has to deliver it; for Macbeth expected him to bring Macduff with him.

45. **holy angel**: he hopes that God has heard Macduff's cry to King Edward in His name, and has sent a messenger to him charging him to help the cause that Macduff is on his



way to plead for before him. **angel**: messenger (of heaven); the original Greek meaning.

47. **his message**: Macduff's mission to ask for help for Scotland from the king, in the name of God. **ere he come**: before Macduff arrives at the English court to fulfil his mission. What a picture have we here! Two messengers, each on his way; the one, a scowling creature of Macbeth's, reluctantly carrying back bad news to his master; the other, a bright angel of heaven, flying eagerly with an order from Heaven itself to England, to arise and help. Macduff, with his message, with all the haste he can make, can arrive only by post or Dak, as it were; Heaven itself sends a *telegram*, in that angel, to deliver that message beforehand!

48. The grammatical order is "*our country suffering under*".

## ACT IV

### SCENE 1

1-47. It is only after we have seen the terrible results of the incantations of the witches, that we are shown the details of the rites that brought them about: apart from these results, and in themselves, these rites are merely loathsome in their ingredients, and ridiculous in their procedure; but this is no reason, as it has been made to be one, for the "rejection" of ll. 1-47 of this scene. In the quackery, and even in the reputable, but unscientific, practice of medicine in Shakespeare's days, things entered into their *materia medica* and *pharmacopœia*, whose supposed efficacy depended on qualities like those possessed by the magic ingredients here; some of them figure in Hogarth's Plates of a century and a half later, and like abominations still find a place in the quackery of the world, east or west; witchcraft itself was widely believed in in those days, and was called in as an aid to medical art: and

its *materia magica* on the stage would be an exaggerated list of some of the stores in the chemist's and druggist's shops of the times; the disgust, therefore, that we, in these days, feel, even at the thought of using such medicines if our doctors prescribed any of them for us, is so great, as to make us fling them out even from Shakespeare's plays, as we would have flung them out of our sick-room in the other case; but Shakespeare, living in those days, was less squeamish, and found them too useful to fling them out so; this usefulness was that they served his dramatic purpose; this they did in two ways: one is that the movement of the action requires them, for the omission of ll. 1-47, out of disgust for what they contain, would compel him to open the scene *per saltum* at l. 48; in other words rejecting these lines as an interpolation, would make Macbeth ask a question without a cause, use a pronoun without an antecedent for the antecedent of his "it" must be these lines or nothing; the other is that these lines serve the *moral purpose of the action*. After we have seen what the power of Evil can do, we are left in fear and awe of evil, and made to *look up* to it as a power superior to ours, or to any other beyond ours; we must not be allowed to remain so; but by being shewn the means through which evil works its ends, we are made to hate and loathe it, and to *look down* upon it; we are made to see it ceremoniously handling things as its sacraments, that we would not touch except with a pair of tongs, to fling off, as an abomination; the rites of the devil's religion, like its priestesses, must be made ugly, loathsome, as the rites of all religions that worship God are solemn, beautiful; it would be inartistic to invest the rites of devil-worship with the impressiveness of the Prayer Book, or of the Mass, or of the silent prayers uplifted to heaven in the Moslem mosque, or of the absorbed communing between man and his God in Hindu worship: the worship of the witches' religion, to be artistic, must be made repulsive; Banquo has told us what these priestesses, the devil's clergy, look like; they themselves have told us how they spend their week-days and holidays, and here they show us how they celebrate their

Sabbath worship; and their looks, recreation, work, are all alike loathsome. Therefore the repulsiveness of these lines 1-47, is the best proof that they are artistic, and that Shakespeare was the artist, and that the lines are all his own.

This is the last of the witch scenes, portions of all of which have been "rejected", because of their "lowness", by critics who cannot bear to think that *their* Shakespeare was capable of such "low" writing, and their Shakespeare's witches capable of such "low" actions, that bring disgrace alike upon Shakespeare, upon *his* witches and upon their near relatives, the classical, aristocratic Nornæ and Parcæ. Of what that "Shakespearian language" is, there is no grammar, no vocabulary, and *no idea*, which they who talk of it, and we who hear their talk, have ever been able to make clear.

1-3. The first witch has the same, the second, a different, familiar; the familiar of the third is named here, but was nameless in I, i.

2. **thrice and once**: a witches' way of counting four.

3. **harpier**: some imaginary monstrosity, as were the *harpies* of the Greek mythology. **'Tis time**: spoken by the witch, the familiar merely uttering an inarticulate cry, of which its mistress understood the meaning; none of the familiars can speak.

6. Scan: Tóad | thát án | dèr có | öld stóne | : "toad" and "cold" being drawn out into dissyllables; this insufferable sing-song metre better suits this doggerel than the bolder metre that makes these two words stressed monosyllables. The very rhythm of the witches' verse is ugly.

8. **sweltered**: formed by heat, exuded through heat.

10. **double**: verb imperative, not an adjective. **toil and trouble**: for him against whom they are being brewed.

23-33. These ingredients down to l. 20 are procurable easily enough; those following are rare and dangerous to secure.

23. **gulf**: gullet. **mummy**: not merely the embalmed corpse, but the oil that exudes (or is said to do so) from such bodies; an oil, said to have this precious source, is still sold



by Afgan traders to India, under the name of *mumai*, as a sovereign medicine.

24. **ravined**: (1) ravining, ravenous; the use of *-ed* for *-ing* is less common than that of *-ed* for *-able* in Elizabethan grammar; this meaning merely states a common fact about this fish. (2) gluttoned with prey; this meaning is specially suitable here; for the *contents* of the gullet or maw may be as potent, if not more so, than the "gulf" itself.

26. **blaspheming Jew**: any one of that race will do; they are called so, for refusing to believe in Christ.

28. **slivered**: stripped off. **moon's eclipse**: this phenomenon is lucky for the work of the witches, just because it is unlucky for the work of human beings; because to them "soul is fair".

32. **slab**: slimy; they like, and men dislike, slimy food.

33. **chaudron**: entrails; same word as "cauldron"; both meaning a vessel (or organ of the body) in which things are warmed. Lat: *calidus*, warm. In the *Fairy Queen*, Spenser's allegory of the Human Body makes the stomach to be a cauldron.

36. **fire**: dissyllable, *fi'-er*, trochee.

37. Here, as above, *alliteration* seems to be a potent factor in the efficacy of these ingredients.

43. **enchanting**: bestowing magical properties on.

52-60. Though you may have to cause universal havoc before you can answer me, cause it, and answer me.

52. **untie**: let loose.

53. **churches**: these edifices are most exposed to the winds, because of their spires and towers, and are most obnoxious to witches, because of their sacred use. **yeasty**: yeasty, foamy.

54. **confound**: wreck. **swallow**: cause to founder. **navigation**: ships.

55. **lodged**: laid flat, and so ruined for harvest.

57. **pyramids**: this form is the most stable of all forms. that a building can have.

59. **germens**: germs; "germ," "germen," "German," are all three the same word, meaning related by origin. Lat: *germen*, root. **tumble**: fall back into a state of chaos.

60. **sicken**: is sick through surfeit. Macbeth's swelled head of selfishness seeks his own good at all costs—whether at the cost of the Scottish people, or of the human race, or of the cosmos of the whole universe—in which let everything go to rack and ruin, *for his sake*.

61. Their alacrity to answer him proceeds from malice; for they know the answer will raise false hopes in him.

63. **our masters**: they simply mean the Apparitions of their own raising, that they are about to show him, but they call them their "masters" to inspire Macbeth with greater awe; read in the plural, "*masters*" or "*masters'*," not singular "*master's*": this bit of mystification has been misunderstood, and much guessing about *who* are meant has been indulged in.

64. **Pour . . . blood**: this seems to be the way in which the witches send out an apparitor ("call' em") to summon the apparitions to show themselves.

65. **nine farrow**: litter of nine little piggies. **grease**: we may call this murderer's "mummy", l. 23.

67. **high or low**: in rank; Macbeth's apparition ranks lowest, as being least potent.

68. **office**: part, in answering Macbeth. **an armed Head**: Macbeth's own, as it was when cut off by Macduff; in that state, the head knew better about Macduff, than when it stands, as it does now, on Macbeth's shoulders; hence the severed head of Macbeth is able to warn the living Macbeth.

69. **unknown power**: he little knows that it is his own head, quite familiar to him elsewhere, that he is addressing as an utter stranger! A little bit of comedy. **he . . . thought**: for he is not only a spirit, but is Macbeth's *own* spirit.

73. **whatever . . . art**: Macbeth again shows that he is ignorant of his own self.

74. **harped**: touched upon, as by a harpist touching the right string.

75. Scan: Hè will | nót | bè | com mán̄d | -éd hére's | ànóth | -(er); "will" and "not" are both stressed, "-er" is hypermetries.



76. **more potent**: more "high", (l. 67) for he kills the first.

**S. D. a bloody Child**: the infant Macduff, as he looked, when cut out of the bleeding womb, and covered with blood.

78. **three ears**: to listen to what you will say after you have called out my name thrice; one ear to each call!

82. **Then live**: this good resolution is but a momentary flash, and is swallowed up the next moment in the blackness of his evil nature, growing blacker at each crime:—Duncan was murdered because he stood directly in his way; Banquo, because he would in the future stand in the way of *his* possible issue; (he had hoped for male children, I, vii, 73); Macduff is to be killed, not for anything he has done or will do, but as a timely precaution against his possibly doing anything—what it may be, he does not care—in the future.

84. **take a bond**: he cannot trust the mere *spoken* words of Fate (ll. 79-81); but he will take a written bond from her; and that bond is—to kill Macduff before Fate can set him in motion against him; *such* a bond Fate cannot break, even if she wishes. What a very Shylock has Macbeth become to his old friend, Fate!

86. **sleep...thunder**: sleep soundly, after defying the thunder of the voice of Fear to awake me. **thunder**: the fear of an unexpected blow being suddenly struck at me.

**S. D. a Child crowned** : Malcolm,

88. **round and top**: the crown with its circular rim, with the arches rising above it.

93. **Dunsinane** : accented on the second syllable here; elsewhere it is Dúnsínáne.

95. **impress** : compel to serve.

94-103. Macbeth's blind confidence is now at its height; his questions have been answered, and the answers are all that he could wish them to be. But he wants to know more; he is warned to desist; he insists, and is shown more than he wishes for.

97. **Rebellion's head** : the gathering of the discontented thanes into a rebel army; the corrupt Folio reading "*rebellious*

"dead" has been supported by futile references to these apparitions. **rise never** : never dare to lift your head, never look for success, till Birnam's wood etc., i.e. till the impossible happens. Macbeth is of course aware of the assembling of this rebel army of Scots which the "lord" has referred to above.

98. **our**: Macbeth lovingly calls his own royal self by this pronoun, because nobody else—not one among those who might have called him so—his subjects—ever do call him so—ever call him "*our king*". This king in a tragedy, drunk with bloodshed, sings his own National Anthem, "Long live our Macbeth to rule over us", as a king in a comedy, drunk out of the bottle, sings his, "God save our gracious king. Stephano", as his only two subjects do not sing it in his honour (*in the Tempest*).

100. Give up his breath in the fulness of time, when death, in the course of nature, comes to him; let not his breath be untimely cut short by a violent death; "Long live king Macbeth"! so sings king Macbeth, joyfully.

106. **sinks . . . cauldron** : the cauldron was needed for brewing the sights of the misfortunes, falsely disguised as hopes, in store for Macbeth: its work being done, it disappears; and in its place, is heard music that is to celebrate the entry of the vision of the good fortune in store for Banquo's issue. Critics see no use either for Hecate or for the "drop profound" that she gets from the moon: there is good use for both:—it was in the power of the three witches to make the deceptive predictions, from the first to the last, without Hecate's aid or her sanction; but it was in Hecate's power alone to show the simple truth about the future, without any deceptive ambiguity, and she does so here; it is no objection that she speaks nothing; for it was she who, with the help of that "drop profound" made this *film* of the "Eight kings"; the witches only work it, before the audience. It is pleasing to find that Shakespeare was the first to give a hint of the kinematograph, as he was, of aviation, of the wireless, of the electric cable (all which he does in the *Tempest*).



106. **noise** : music; this word, now the very anti-thesis of music, had this meaning in Elizabethan, and also that of a band of musicians.

S. D. **A show of Eight Kings &c.** : the kings of Scotland down to James VI, before the Union with England, pass in this procession; then are shown in the mirror the *future* sovereigns of Great Britain after the Union. Hunter gives a reference to a show, by a magician, in Shakespeare's days, made before the Queen of France, Catherine de Medici, of the kings of France who had preceded her and of those who were to follow her. In the play, Mary, Queen of Scots, is not in the procession; no doubt out of regard to her relations with queen Elizabeth, and to the feelings of her son, James I. Banquo was the ancestor of the House of Stuart. Reader, imagine, on the one hand, this stately procession of silent, impassive shadows, and, on the other, the frantic, staring, storming, stamping Macbeth whose "heart they grieve".

113. **sear** : with thy dazzling brightness; the reference is to the practice of destroying the eyes of *criminals* by passing a glowing-hot iron before them, as a form of punishment; but Macbeth did not know this reference, while unconsciously making it. **hair** : the first three of the show all resemble Banquo, proving their descent from him; they are "too like" him to leave any doubt of that descent; the colour of the hair must have been as it was before it became "*blood-boltered*".

116. **start** : from your sockets; they are already nearly doing so.

117. **crack** : crash; see Note, I, ii, 37.

119. **the eighth** : an eighth, pointing to it ("the" : that). **glass** : magic mirror.

121. **twofold balls** : (1) the two crowns of England and Scotland first united under James I; (2) the two coronations of James VI in Scotland and of him again as James I. in England; (3) the two islands of Great Britain and Ireland; this may be rejected. **treble sceptres** : (1) the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland; (2) those of Great Britain, *France* and Ireland; this is cutting matters too fine,



for the kingship of France was now wholly titular in history; the reference to the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, now distinct and in antagonism, in future to be united into Great Britain, is to the point; that to France, though figuring in the herald's proclamations, is pointless here in the play.

123. **blood-boltered** : with face and hair clotted with blood. When we saw Duncan in our mind's eyes, for the last time, he was at rest and at peace; when we see Banquo now, also for the last time, he smiles; what is their murderer's state of mind and body?

125. **sir** : your highness, your majesty; the witches utter this in tones of triumphant mockery.

130. **antic** : (1) old fashioned (2) performed by venerable dancers like we three. Critics and stage-managers, following the folio direction at l. 39, "Enter Hecate and the three other witches" (which is evidently either corrupt or looks upon Hecate as herself a witch) make six witches (three of them dummies) take part in this dance; and the former give far-fetched explanations about the "three other", merely raising uncalled-for ghosts of difficulties.

132. This is the farewell that the witches bid, in solemn mockery, to their dupe; and it is an intimation that the partnership between them is at an end. **kindly** : be pleased to. **duties . . . pay** : that we dutifully welcomed the honour of his visit, and advised him (for the last time) as members of His Majesty's privy council.

135. **S. D. Enter Lennox** : Lennox, then, still keeps up the appearance of loyalty to Macbeth, and with a circumspection that disarms any suspicion in that suspicious mind, so far indeed that he has taken him with him on this visit to the witches, and left him outside, when he entered the cavern.

139. **damn'd . . . them** : with these words, Macbeth pronounces damnation on his own soul.

140-142. (1) On receiving Macduff's reply, "Sir, not I" (III, vi, 40) which the scowling messenger said he would rue, Macbeth had "sent" again; this time it being emissaries to bring Macduff dead or alive to him, and it was these men



who had returned in hot haste to report that Macduff had fled; or (2) these men were some of the spies that Macbeth kept about Fife Castle (as he himself had said) who had galloped in to report the flight. Because of the messenger's threat that he would rue his reply, and because it is more to the credit of Macbeth's growing promptitude of action the first alternative above is better.

143-155. Macbeth discovers that hitherto he has been *too slow* in planning and carrying out; and resolves that henceforth no sooner does the thought of a murder as being necessary arise in his mind, than it will be carried out into a deed by his hand : "My slowness, has lost me Macduff's head; I will lose no more time, but will at once make amends for my delay by taking the lives of his wife and children; and one thing more:—no more dealings with the witches." Thus, on his part (as they have on theirs) does Macbeth dissolve the partnership between himself and the witches; so that they, to their credit, have no hand in his next enterprise—the murder of an innocent woman and her children.

144. **anticipat~~e~~st** : preventest.

145. A purpose, unless carried out at once, is never carried out at all, but vanishes when delayed.

147. **firstlings . . . heart** : purposes as soon as they are born in my mind.

148. **firstlings . . . hand** : my actions in carrying out those purposes—an action following immediately upon a purpose, in each case.

149. **be it . . . done** : no sooner thought of . . . than done.

152. **all** : unluckily one escaped and became the ancestor of the dukes of Fife; there has always been a fly in Macbeth's ointment : Duncan was killed, but Malcolm escaped; Banquo was killed, but Fleance escaped; Macduff was to have been killed, but could not be caught in time.

153. **trace him** : go back to him as their ancestor. **No boasting** : no waste of time in bragging about what I mean to do.



155. Scan : But no" | more sights | where are | these gen |  
tlèmen | : no and where, are each doubly stressed; the fifth  
foot, is a compensating unstressed pyrrhic.

## SCENE 2

We may here take stock of Macbeth's murders, including those in the future :—First murder : one victim (with two minor victims thrown in); the second : two victims marked, but one escapes; the third : a family and household marked, and all slaughtered, mother, children, servants, "all that could be found" (IV. iii, 211, 212); the fourth : indiscriminate slaughter, with his own hands, in the last battle—these four are enacted under our own eyes; we are, besides, told of many murders carried out *daily*, leaving orphans and widows to cry to heaven, for there was no help for them on earth (IV, iii, 5).

1. Lady Macduff's very first words show that she knows of no disloyal act on her husband's part against the king.

4. Our . . . traitors : an action done out of fear is misconstrued, as if it was done from treasonous motives. Macduff's fears for his own life have been seized upon by Macbeth as a design against *his* life; this is what she means by "*madness*" (1.3); her husband was mad in taking to flight, for it gave rise to this fatal misconception.

5. his wisdom : not his madness, as you say; this wisdom merely consisted in getting out of Macbeth's reach before it was too late; and what is that but his fear, as Lady Macduff rightly calls it? Ross, unlike Lennox, is not strong in his power of reasoning; but we shall soon see him in a light higher than reasoning can set a man.

6-14. This is the meaning she puts on his flight :—"He has fled through fear for his own life, and through want of love for his wife and children; he loves himself more than he loves us". She is right about the 'fear', but wrong about the 'want of love'; as we shall see.

7. titles : possessions and powers as thane of Fife.



8. **loves us not** : this thought of love is uppermost in her mind; and she expected it would be uppermost in her husband's mind also; ambition had been uppermost in the minds of two others; here lies the radical difference between these two couples.

9. **natural touch** : touch of nature; feeling implanted in all human breasts, and in the breasts of even birds and beasts.

11. **in**: being in. **the owl**: that comes to prey on her young ones.

12. **fear** : for his own life. **love** : that should have made him fear for the lives of his family.

14. **against reason** : for it makes us look like traitors when we are none; this is what she calls his "madness" in l. 3.

15. **school yourself** : calm yourself; she has been speaking in excited and indignant tones. **for** : as for.

16-22. This is Ross's defence of Macduff, which his delicacy of feeling makes him put in embarrassed language, and which in plain language, would be something like this:—"My dear cousin, your husband heard rumours that Macbeth, on hearing of his refusal (cf. III, vi, 42 sq.), had sent out emissaries against his life, and that thereupon he had fled". Here arises a further question:—On hearing of Macduff's flight, Macbeth had given vent to his diabolical threat against his family, in Lennox's hearing: had Lennox imparted this to Ross? If he had, why does not Ross communicate it to Lady Macduff now? Lennox knew this threat, but his cold nature only made him "wait and see"; Ross, whether he knew only the rumour about Macduff alone, or both it and the threat against his family, had followed his gentle nature, and flown to warn his cousin, Lady Macduff: but—and here is the uncertainty—neither Ross, nor even Lennox, could believe that Macbeth was so much of a devil as to carry out that threat; and Macduff had fled, leaving wife and children behind him, also never dreaming that Macbeth was so much of a devil as to kill his family, because he could not be in time to kill him. I explain this difficulty so.



17. **fits . . . season** : (1) violent disorders nowadays prevalent (under the present king), (2) critical moments, acute stages in the political disease the present times suffer from, caused by the acute stages to which the present ruler's cruelty rises. **fits** : this is Macbeth's own word for those paroxysms (of terror, when he used it, of cruelty to which terror drives him, as Ross uses it) that come over him.

18. **are** : are thought to be, are misjudged to be.

19. **not . . . ourselves** : know that we are *not* traitors, when we are thought to be traitors.

18, 19. **But . . . ourselves** : This clearly refers to the danger that Macduff incurred at Macbeth's hands.

19, 20. **when . . . fear** : (1) when our fears, because we cannot clearly define ("know") them, predispose us to believe ("hold") every rumour that we hear. (2) when we interpret ("hold") rumours, as our fears lead us to interpret them, though we cannot clearly define to ourselves what those fears are. (3) when we are held in rumour to be traitors (when we have a bad name as being traitors) on account of actions that are really prompted by fear. Of these explanations, (3) is clearly the same as that of ll. 18, 19 both thus referring to Macduff's flight; (1) and (2) have the same meaning in substance, and refer, in veiled language, to the threat against Lady Macduff and her children; unveiled, this would stand thus :—"My cousin, I have heard rumours about you and your children; I have fears about you and them; but I do not know what those fears exactly are; for I do not know *how far* to believe those rumours"; by "rumours," Ross means Macbeth's threat, of which he had heard from Lennox, and by "fears" he means that he does not know *how far* that threat is going to be carried out. His veiled way of warning her is not understood by Lady Macduff; had he spoken plainly, she would have understood, but she would still be as helpless to escape as she is now, when he leaves her, for the murderers are even now about to enter the castle. The critics say nothing to explain the meaning of these lines.



20-22. This refers in veiled language to the danger that Lady Macduff and her children run at Macbeth's hands; and these lines indicate that Ross had heard from Lennox the threat that Macbeth in one of his "fits" had uttered. Ross had run to warn her; but now in her presence, his courage fails him to give the warning in plain language.

21, 22. But in the turmoil of disorder and violence that now prevails all round, we are like floating wreckage, helplessly tossed to and fro by the raging waters, and unable to take a definite course, one way or the other. This tossing to and fro is the present state of Ross's "gentle", but weak-minded, character; he cannot make up his mind whether to believe or to disbelieve that Macbeth will really carry out his threat to the full. **Each...move** : readings. (1) "*and move each way*". (2) "*each way and none*". (3) "*each wave and move*." (4) "*and each way move*". Whichever of these readings best suggests a *rocking motion* on the surface of water, is the best to adopt; other readings are far-fetched. **I...leave** : Ross has seen Macbeth's men in Fife and advancing to storm the castle; though he must have flown at once on hearing of the threat from Lennox, Macbeth has been as good as his word about "firstlings", and had *at once* sent out his storming party (and assassins), and they were in Fife as quickly as Ross, who feels that his own life is in danger as an informer, if he is found within the castle, when stormed; this is why he leaves it.

23. **shall** : I shall, or it shall; he means to return and see *how far* the threat has been carried out.

24. When things are at their worst, they cannot become worse; or else they begin to become better; this a truism but by it Ross means, in his own mind, that the worst may happen to her, or may *not* happen to her; that the threat may be carried out *to the full*, or it may stop at the occupation of the castle by Macbeth's troops, without proceeding to the lives of its mistress and her children.



25. **To . . . before** : to their former happy state; Ross hopes against hope that all will be well at the end. **pretty cousin**: addressing the little boy.

29. I would not be able to restrain my tears, but would forget my manhood, and weep like a woman or a child; it is evident that Ross's fears are getting the better of his hopes.

30. **Sirrah** : used playfully, as if in pity and contempt of the little fellow, at his supposed loss and helplessness.

32. **with** : on.

34. **Poor bird**: iambus; *Poor birds* in l. 36, trochee.

34, 35. He would not fear, for being so young he would not know what danger is; and yet danger is so near! The mother talks of death in jest, and yet death is so near in terrible earnest! **lime**: bird-lime. **gin**: trap; short for "engine".

36. **Poor . . . set for**: (1) they (nets, gins &c.) are not set for *poor* birds, for they are not worth catching; it is only songsters (birds "rich" in song) that run the danger of being thus caught: (2) (with comma after "birds") "*they*" is in apposition with "birds"; poor birds are not set for. We can see a hidden "moral" even in this prattle of the child:—Macbeth kills these poor innocent children, whose deaths will not in any way help his cause, but would be an act of wanton cruelty: "poor, helpless little children are not killed by any one", says Macbeth's victim, in effect, without knowing what he says.

41. She had made a careless slip in mentioning so many husbands bought *at once*, and the boy takes her up sharply saying she will buy *one at a time* and sell him for another!

44. **traitor**: he had heard Ross use that word generally, and is sharp enough to take it as meant for his father.

47. **swears . . . lies**: swears loyalty and breaks his oath.

56. **hang up them**: hang them up.

30-56. A child's prattle as all this is, it is precocious enough; little Macduff's childish strength, to call it so, lies in his intelligence; little Arthur's, in *King John*, lies in his persuasiveness.



30-62. Ross's cryptic warning has not been intelligible to Lady Macduff; hence, when he leaves, we find her playfully laughing and joking with her little boy; with whom her talk is all about his father, and not a word of it shows suspicion or alarm about danger to herself or the little prattler.

63-71. Whoever this "Messenger" is, he gives in plain language the *same* warning that Ross has just given in his enigmatic way: Lady Macduff understands of course the messenger and takes the alarm: what a dreadfully, sudden change there is from unsuspecting security to despairing terror! This is the meaning of ll. 30-62, which critics, who do not see it, call "flat", "wrong" between mother and son, and "unworthy of Shakespeare, and say that they are an "interpolation by Middleton", the wretched scapegoat for many of Shakespeare's offences.

63. **S.D. Enter a messenger:** Who is he? (1) He is one of the party sent by Macbeth; he knows the secret commission on which it is sent; and he perhaps is one of the very men selected to carry it out, i.e., is one of the murderers chosen by Macbeth; l. 69 ("to do worse") supports this strongly; and in this hired assassin we have one, who, moved with a pity that his hirer never felt, comes at great risk to himself, to warn her, and give her a chance of escape. A hired assassin here, a drunken porter before, are both better men than their master, and this one loathes the work he makes him do. (2) He is one of Macduff's clansmen; who somehow has got wind of Macbeth's secret commission, and has come to warn his chief's lady; if so, here is proof that the Macduffs have many among their vassals who bear personal love towards them; while the Macbeths, we may be sure from Macbeth's own words, have only those who serve him through fear, and not a single friend or well-wisher.

63. **dame:** the wives of knights and lords were once so addressed; the title has been revived in the title of honour nowadays bestowed on women.

64. I know very well your good deeds that make you honoured by all; this favours explanation (2) above; Lady

Macduff was known and loved far and wide in Fife for beneficence, quietly and unobtrusively dispensed.

65. **doubt:** fear. **some danger:** the appearance of a body of armed men, making for the Castle, had alarmed many of the natives of Fife; this again favours (2) above. These armed men had gained quiet access into the castle, the guards having opened the gates to them, as messengers coming from the king; this accounts for the sudden entry of the murderers into Lady Macduff's apartments without any previous warning that an assault by a storming party would have given.

68. **thus:** as I can see from your ladyship's looks of fear at my sudden entry.

69. **To do worse:** what is this "worse"? What he has already said has filled her with fear for her personal safety—fear for her life and of the lives of her little ones; to do worse than that would surely be to bring about the realization of those fears—would be to have a hand in killing her and them. This strongly favours explanation (1) above. The phrase can be made to apply to explanation (2) only by being taken to mean, "to do worse—to kill you all, as I fear is the order that I suspect men whom I have met on the way, are about to carry out". This of course would not make him to be one of those suspected men—the assassins.

71. Scan : I ~ dāre | abide | nō longér | whither shòuld | I ~ fl'y | "longer" and "whither" are monosyllables; the fourth foot is a trochee. **I . . . longer:** like Ross, this good man is in danger of his own life, if found with Lady Macduff by the assassins.

76. **womanly:** weak, such as woman can set up.

77. **faces:** men, with such an expression on their faces; it is only such creatures that could perform such deed.

78. This question seems to show that the assassins expected to find Macduff at the castle, and were not aware of his flight; but it may be only a pretence to bring in the reason of their errand—to kill the traitor's family, since the traitor is not to be found.



79. Though in mortal terror, yet her indignation breaks forth on being addressed in this brutal way by this low ruffian.

81. The son dies in defending the good name of his father, and defying his calumniator; the little boy in *King John* saved his own life through the child-like trust he placed in his intended murderer. **shag-haired:** having a shock head of hair. **egg:** not yet hatched into a serpent; a traitor in the egg.

82. **fry:** spawn of treachery. Lady Macduff runs out to save her other children and, like the very wren she had described, is killed when defending them, as feebly, against their murderers. We may guess this, as it happens behind the scenes; but the news is kept from us, that the bereaved father may be the first to be told of it. The plan and incidents of this murder of the Macduffs in the play may be compared with those in Holinshed, which in brief were these: To serve as a central stronghold for the exercise of his tyranny, Macbeth began building the castle of Dunsinane, through the forced labour of the clansmen under their chiefs, each chief being required to come in person, with his contingent. Macduff, alone of the thanes, refused to come in person, but sent his contingent. For this recalcitrance Macbeth resolved on his death; but, deceived by a prediction by a witch about Birnam wood and Dunsinane, delayed the execution of his resolve; which gave Macduff time to fly to England. The news of his flight was brought to Macbeth by "one of those sly fellows whom he kept as spies in every nobleman's house". Thereupon Macbeth himself forthwith set out for Fife "with a great power" to besiege the castle; but the garrison, "without any resistance opened the gates, and suffered him to enter, mistrusting no evil." Macbeth then "most cruelly caused the wife and children of Macduff, with all others whom he found in that castle, to be slain", confiscated Macduff's possessions and proclaimed him traitor.



## SCENE 3

Malcolm's nature, with its watchful distrust is a contrast to his father's, with its blind trustfulness. Macbeth had repeatedly tried to get him into his power through pretending deserters who tried to entice him back to Scotland. Malcolm in this scene suspects Macduff to be one of these; and to make sure puts him to the test.

1-113. *Malcolm*: Let us sit down and weep over Scotland. *Macduff*: Scotland cries to us for redress; stand up and join me, sword in hand, to apply it. *Ml*: I must make sure before I believe all that you have to say, and I must take time before I can think of taking action on what I come to believe; you are Macbeth's friend, and you may be thinking of riveting this friendship by getting me into his power. *Md*: (indignantly) I mean no such treachery. *Ml*: But Macbeth does; and your loyalty to him may prove too strong for the honesty of your purpose towards me, and might make you betray me to him; if you are not treacherous by nature, my suspicion of you will not make you to become treacherous; but though the good always look good, sometimes the bad can look as if they were good; pardon my saying so. *Md*: My hopes in you are gone. *Ml*: Perhaps they are gone because of that very action of yours that makes me suspect you:—Why did you leave your wife and children behind you, when you fled? Forgive me; for I speak thus through fear for my own safety; I may be wrong, and you may have good reasons for having done so, without any design against me. *Md*: (despairingly) Bleed, poor Scotland; farewell, Malcolm; I would not be the villain you take me for, for anything on earth. *Ml*: Stay; don't go away; I don't suspect you as much as you think; I believe, I may say it now, all that you have said about the state of our country; I can also tell you that I have hopes of help from England, strong enough to enable us to overthrow Macbeth. But—if I then become king, Scotland will be no better off



than she is now. *Md* : (astonished) How can that be ? Then follows the comedy of Malcolm giving a false character to himself, worse than Macbeth's ; and Macduff's renewed despair for Scotland, and indignant contempt for Malcolm personally.

3. **good men** : true men, and not like women, sitting down and crying.

4. **our birthdom** : our country in which dwells our birthright.

5-8. The results of wide-spread murder and desolation,

6, 7. The cries of Scotland that rise to heaven, are echoed back from heaven; and the echo sounds like the cry of heaven itself at these sufferings on earth.

8. **syllable** : every cry is heard by heaven, and re-echoed from it; not a single cry is lost to the ears of heaven.

9. **know** : know for certain.

10. I shall take time and wait for a favourable chance.  
**to friend** : (1) (verb) to befriend, to be favourable. (2) (noun) as a friend, for a friend.

11. What you say may be true.

12, 13. But it may also be untrue. **sole name** : name alone : the mere utterance of whose name (has power to inflict wounds).

14. **young** : and more likely, therefore, to fall into a trap.

15. And you may be trying to lay the trap, that you might win favour with Macbeth. **through** : by betraying. and **wisdom** : and 'tis wisdom; the absence of this obvious 'tis has led some **to think, quite** unnecessarily, that something has dropped out here ; the omission, by condensing the grammar, makes the sense pithy, as befits an aphorism.

17. **god** : a god to Macduff, but a wolf to Malcolm : Macduff's words speak much for his honesty, but his looks speak more.

19-20. A virtuous nature, such as I think yours is, may yet swerve from virtue, when loyalty requires you to do something to please your king, though you know it to be against



virtue. **recoil** : swerve from virtue. **imperial charge** : command laid (on it) by a sovereign.

21. My thinking you to be treacherous cannot alter your nature, from what it really is, to what I think it to be,

22-24. The good are always good, whatever any one thinks them to be and though sometimes one who is good may turn out to be bad (as in l. 19) ; and the bad may sometimes outwardly look like the good, yet the good always look like what they are : so says Malcolm, wishing to be guarded and yet conciliating in what he says; the result is this balanced, colourless way of speaking, that leaves it still an open question, under which class he takes Macduff to fall.

24. **hopes** : of Scotland's deliverance with your co-operation.

25. Perhaps you have lost your hopes in me through that very action of your own that makes me fear and suspect you.

26-28. This is that action, of which Lady Macduff mistook the motive in her own way, and Malcolm mistakes in his :—I fear and suspect that you left Scotland hastily under secret orders from Macbeth, and without taking leave of wife and children, lest you might be pressed to reveal to them the secret of your mission. **rawness** : haste. **motives** : persons, consideration for whom should have strongly influenced you.

29. In suspecting you thus, I am only consulting my own safety, and insinuating nothing against your honour. **be** : be taken by you as. **dishonours** : (plural) reiterated expressions of insulting suspicions against your honour.

30. **safeties** : (plural) manifold considerations of safety for myself. **rightly just** : truly honourable, not treacherous. Malcolm now withdraws his suspicions, but he does so in guarded language—"you may be."

31-37. Macduff's outraged feelings disdain to answer Malcolm's question, and give vent to themselves now at greater length than they did in that short cry in l. 24. It is Scotland's welfare that is uppermost in his mind ; his own welfare, the

least ; it was Scotland's destruction, for the sake of his "own good," that was uppermost in Macbeth's.

32. **Great tyranny**: tyranny that nothing now can check, nothing now can overthrow.

33. **wear . . . wrongs** : display, in royal state, the wrongs that thou hast committed ("thy"), as if they were badges of honour.

34. **The . . . affeer'd** : (1) thy ("tyranny's") title to commit them (these "wrongs") unquestioned, unresisted, is now confirmed, (by Malcolm's refusal to join in putting an end to them) ; this is the correct way : (2) taking antecedent of "thou" l. 33, to be "*country*," l. 31: O my poor country, endure patiently ("wear") the wrongs done to thee ("thy") ; for thy title to wear them is now confirmed ; this is incorrect, for the wronged cannot be said to have a *title* to endure wrongs. (3) taking antecedent of "thou" to be Malcolm, to whom Macduff now turns ; and reading "*afraid*" instead of "*affeered*" : Malcolm, submit to your wrongs tamely, for your title to right them is afraid of asserting itself ; this is incorrect, for the full force of turning round to Malcolm only to bid farewell to him with withering contempt in l. 34, is lost ; **affeer'd** : an old law term meaning either (1) affirmed, confirmed, probably from Lat. *affirmare* ; or (2) adjudicated ; the process at law being the fixing of the amount of a fine for wrong-doing, by affeerers or jurymen ; from Lat. *ad, forum*, court of justice ; or (3) a play upon this law term and the ordinary word "to fear" to be frightened, to be afraid. Macduff addresses ll. 31-34 ("*Bleed . . . affeered*") all to Scotland, disdains to exchange another word of appeal or expostulation with Malcolm, and turns his eyes from the visionary distance on which they are fixed when addressing Scotland, to Malcolm only at the words "Fare thee well," keeps them fixed on him with contemptuous indignation, and at l. 37 turns unceremoniously on his heels to go.

37. **Be . . . offended** : Malcolm by a quick gesture makes him change his mind and stop, when he makes this apology



in altered tones of *full* confidence; and in ll. 38-44 fixes his attention and raises unexpected new hopes in him.

39-41. He here says he believes what, in l. 9. he had said he disbelieved. **I think**: he more than "thinks," he knows for certain; but this cautious young man comes out *gradually* with the good news he is now going to give to Macduff.

43. **England**: the king of England.

46. **wear...sword** : heads of traitors after execution were so carried.

46-49. This is a new surprise for Macduff, after the surprise of the news of English aid forthcoming; and with these two surprises Malcolm rivets his attention anew, when he was on the point of giving him up: it is amusing to see how the younger man twirls the older round on his little finger, as it were. **what...be**: "whom can you possibly mean" says the bewildered Macduff.

51. **particulars of vice** : every particular vice that goes to make up a thoroughly vicious character. **grafted** : in the bud, in a young man in adversity and helpless.

52. **open'd** : full blown, when that young man grows older, and comes into power and prosperity.

55. **confineless harms** : boundless indulgence in every vice.

56, 57. Not from among the legions of the devils of hell can one devil come from hell to earth, who can be worse than Macbeth; the worst devil in hell, if he comes to earth and takes a human shape, cannot be worse than Macbeth. **top**: surpass.

57-66. Malcolm, after testing Macduff about Macbeth, and finding the test satisfactory, now proceeds to test him about himself; and this he does by drawing a caricature of his own character. The coolness and caution of this youth in dealing with a man much older than himself, shows him to be what his father was not—a born ruler of men. **I grant him**: I agree with you in what you think of Macbeth. Before this scene opened the two had been talking about Macbeth's character, as it had been developing since he began his career

of crime; and Malcolm now, and not before, tells Macduff that he quite believes all that he had been then telling him about Macbeth.

58. **luxurious**: licentious. After the bond of ambition had been severed, no bond of love survived (if it had lived before) between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth; and the latter had taken to this course of vice—conjugal infidelity: contrast this again with the Macduffs.

59. **sudden**: given to fits of passion. Medical critics make this to be one of the grounds for pronouncing Macbeth to be *mad*; Macbeth himself speaks of his "fits" coming on him, and Lady Macbeth says he gets them often.

64. **continent**: restraining within bounds.

57-60. We need not discount this character that Macbeth has developed, on the ground that it comes from an enemy, Macduff, for he had developed into an incarnation of *every* vice.

66, 67. **intemperance . . . tyranny**: (1) (taking "intemperance in nature" as one idea): an intemperate nature in a man is a tyranny over him, which he is powerless to resist. (2) (taking "tyranny in nature" as one idea): indulgence in the bodily appetites is a tyranny over the nature of a man, which he is powerless to resist. (3) intemperance, in its very nature is a tyranny; in (1) and (2) "nature" means a man's nature; "tyranny in nature" is opposed to "tyranny in the state", such as resulted from Macbeth's ambition; in (3) "nature" means in its own nature; in all three "intemperance" means over-indulgence in the bodily appetites, here that of lust; and the resulting "tyranny" means a tyranny over one's own self, as that resulting from ambition is a tyranny over others.

71. **Convey**: conduct in secret; an old meaning was "to steal."

72. **the time**: people's opinion, public opinion about you. **hoodwink**: deceive, keep in ignorance.

66-76. Macduff's single eye to his country's sufferings and their alleviation, makes him grant a wide latitude to



Malcolm's (supposed) vices, even at the cost of calumny against the good name of his countrywomen!

77. **ill-composed**: compounded of many evils, vicious.  
**affection**: disposition.

80. **his**: one man's.

81. **my more-having**: the more I get.

82. **forge**: fabricate, of which the word is an Old Fr. contracted form.

85. **Sticks deeper**: lasts longer; strikes its roots deeper; and so outlives the summer of youth into the winter of old age; like "perennials" in plants.

86. **summer-seeming** (1) resembling summer; acting on the blood like summer heat. (2) appearing in the summer of youth, and disappearing in the winter of old age (like "annuals" in plants).

88. **foisons**: plentiful harvests of wealth among your rich subjects.

89. **your mere own**: what is entirely your own; "All Scotland, with all in it, is the king's" is Macduff's ultra-royalist doctrine! **portable**: endurable.

90. **other graces**: other traits in character that are graces; your virtues.

95. **relish of**: (1) liking for. (2) trace of.

96, 97. I am full of resources for the commission of any crime; if thwarted in one way, I can commit it in many other ways; if prevented under one name, I can succeed in it under other names, i.e. by calling it something else. **division**: varying the means, varying the names; "division" was formerly a technical term in music, meaning variations on the same theme.

98. **milk of concord**: peace and harmony among dwellers on earth; "concord" continues the metaphor from music. **into hell**: emptying this earth of all concord; pouring out sweet milk, as if it was dirty water, down a sink.

99. **Uproar**: disturb, turn upside down; properly, this word indicated quick motion, as it does here, and in the cognate Germ. *aufruhr*; the modern meaning and the spelling



indicate a confusion with loud noise ("roar"). **confound**: destroy. **unity**: unison; same metaphor as in "concord."

57-100. Under pretence of painting his own character in these the blackest of colours, Malcolm, from what he knows and has heard, paints Macbeth's character, as it has been developing itself, adding touches to make his own the worse of the two; and in these last lines he expresses the very same diabolical wish that Macbeth had expressed to the witches in IV, i, 52-60; and, in it, even that word "milk" occurs, that Macbeth was thought to be so full of; the milk of concord on earth being the same as the milk of kindness among men on earth. "I have none of the milk of human kindness in me, and I will not allow others to have it in them," says Malcolm.

102. After making the largest concessions to Malcolm's imaginary vices, Macduff can no longer stand the ever-enlarging list of them; and at his outburst in ll. 102-114, we feel as if they and we are on the brink of another breakdown.

104. **untitled** : usurping.

105. **wholesome**: healthy, happy.

107. **interdiction**: decree of exclusion from the throne.

108. **blaspheme**: calumniate; the original meaning, as in Greek.

109. **sainted**: saintly during life; living the life of a saint. **queen**: this is the only mention of Duncan's wife; but it gives in two lines, the whole story of her life—a life of prayer, a life of the renunciation of the ambitions of this earth, a life of hopes for the happiness of the next world—What a contrast to the life of her relative by marriage, Lady Macbeth!

112. **repeat'st upon**: mentionest, chargest against.

114. Malcolm, his fears and suspicions finally laid aside, now drops the mask; and tells Macduff why he had put it on.

114, 115. **this . . . integrity**: this indignation that you feel at my feigned unworthiness, is born of, is proof of, your honesty of purpose towards me; had you concealed treacherous designs against me, you would not have felt and shown this indignation.



117-119. This very good and sufficient reason absolves Malcolm of any charge of having trifled with Macduff.  
**trains:** lures, lit. what draw. **modest:** prudent. **plucks me:** supply "back".

120, 121. May God judge between us two, if ever again we harbour distrust in our bosoms, and may He punish the one who does.

123. **unspeak:** withdraw.

125. **for:** as being.

130, 131. I love truth as dearly as life itself; I have never spoken an untruth against another; and the first untruth I have spoken is this that I have spoken against myself; and it will be the last.

135. **at a point:** fully appointed, fully equipped.

136. **chance of goodness:** chance of good luck or success falling out.

137. **Be . . . . quarrel:** be proportioned to the justice ("warrant") of our cause.

138. I cannot in a moment change my opinion of your character, from what you described it to be a very short while ago, into what you now describe it to be. This slowness to change his belief is another proof of Macduff's integrity.

140-159. The announcement of aid forthcoming from England, is followed here by a description of the character of the king who is going to grant it; and that character is a complete contrast to that of the king against whom it is to be given—Edward, the agent of God for healing distress on earth; and Macbeth the agent of the devil for working destruction on earth. The connection of these lines with the action of the play has been shown in the *Introduction*. When these lines are so well connected with both characterisation and action in the play, they must be taken to be a part of the author's own plan and design; and it is inept to say that they "have nothing to do" with the play, and that Shakespeare interpolated them as an after-thought, merely to "flatter King James"; or that he should have omitted them, to save himself from this charge being possibly brought against him.



140. **the king:** Edward the Confessor.

141. **crew:** crowd; in older English *any* gathering or company would be called a "crew"; thus in Spenser we have "a crew of lords and ladies" assembled at court; Lat. *crescere*, to grow, to increase.

142. **stay:** wait for. **convinces:** defies, resists successfully.

143. **assay of art:** attempt made by the art of healing, to cure it.

140-145. Saint Edward (he was canonized after his death) is about to work a miraculous cure on the diseased body of Scotland; and his power to do so is here shown by the cures he effects on the bodies of his own diseased subjects.

146. **the evil:** scrofula; hence called "the king's evil".

149. **solicits:** prays to heaven for the healing power.

150. **strangely-visited:** sorely afflicted. **strangely:** (1) of which neither cause nor cure is known (2) in an advanced or aggravated stage of the disease, strangely altering the sufferer's body.

152. **mere:** complete. **despair of surgery:** given up by doctors.

153. **stamp:** medal.

154. **spoken:** said, believed.

155. **succeeding royalty:** kings and queens among his successors; the Stuart kings touched for "the evil".

157. **gift of prophecy:** this is another supernatural power that, by contrasting itself with that of the witches, connects this passage with the action; and here is the whole connection:—The gift of the power of healing bestowed on the king by God, his silent prayer to God before he exercises that power, the simple remedy he applies, whose efficacy depends all upon that prayer—contrasted with the gift of prediction bestowed by the devil upon the witches, their infernal incantations to bring that gift into play, their loathsome rites to render it efficacious; the former, with all reverence for things sacred, named but not described, the latter described in all their loathsomeness to rouse disgust.



160. **my countryman:** Malcolm judges him by his dress, the Scottish *tartan* in plaid and kilt; easily distinguishable amidst the English people in *trews* (trousers or breeches) who were around and about Malcolm. **yet:** at this distance.

161. **ever-gentle:** the ever-present amiable side of Ross's character makes him the fittest messenger to impart the dreadful news he has to bring to the bereaved man. After the massacre of the Macduffs, even Ross's eyes had been opened wide, and he too had fled from Macbeth. What have critics who make Ross out to be the arch villain of the play, to say about him as he figures in this scene? And why is no "poetic justice" dealt out to him, the "arch criminal," while it is dealt out in full measure to his "dupe" the "subcriminal" Macbeth? Did Ross dupe Shakespeare himself?

163. **means:** cause. **makes us strangers:** (1) divides Scotland into two parties, for and against me; Malcolm's caution again: he is not sure on which side Ross is, till his reply shows it. (2) separates me from my friends, makes me a stranger to them, and an exile from my country.

165. **know itself:** recognize itself as being again the Scotland it once was under Duncan.

167. **who knows nothing:** who is blind to all that is going on there. **once:** ever.

168-172. Such things are scarcely noticed, being now things of daily occurrence; Ross's description is quite true in substance, but, as usual with him, it is set forth in highly coloured language.

170. **modern ecstasy:** ordinary, common hysterical fit.

171. **for who:** for whom it is.

172. **flowers:** sprigs of heather or of the thistle, national emblems of the Scotch, stuck in their caps or bonnets.

173. **or ere:** (1) before ever; once a common but incorrect way of writing "or e'er"; in which "or" is the old form of "ere" before. (2) an incorrect spelling for the reduplication "ere ere," in which the second "ere" is misspelt as "e'er." **relation:** narrative.

174. **nice**: set forth in fanciful language. **too true**: as Macduff's own narrative of what he knew shows to be (ll. 2-8). **grief**: cause of grief, act of cruel wrong.

175. **doth . . . speaker**: Ross's "nice way" of saying what in plain words would be this:—If a man gives a piece of news one hour after a thing has happened, then people to whom he gives it hiss him as the retailer of stale news, so quickly do events move!

176. **teems**: gives birth to; so that sixty things—all acts of cruel wrong-doing—have happened in that hour's time!

177. Ross, so eloquent till now on other matters, becomes at once reticent when questioned on this matter of Macduff's family. **children**: *childeeren* (three syllables).

178. **batter'd**: a word suggested by the castle that guarded their peace and safety.

179. **well at peace**: Macduff's question shows that he fears something is wrong at Fife Castle; but he does not as yet suspect the terrible ambiguity that underlies the reply:—(1) nothing had disturbed their peace; they were quite well. (2) they were at peace in the grave; they were in that peace that death brings. **when . . . them**: the same ambiguity again:—(1) when he left them for the *first* time, they were alive and well (2) when he left them for the *second* time (he had called again, as he had promised Lady Macduff) they were in the peace of death.

181. Ross evades answering Macduff's repeated enquiry by pretending to misunderstand his word, 'it'; (1) my family's affairs (as Macduff meant) (2) affairs in Scotland (as Ross pretends it to mean).

183. **that were out**: who had taken the field in arms; the rebels of 1745 were said, by others and by themselves, to have "been out in the '45."

184. My belief in the rumour was confirmed by what I saw with my own eyes.

185. **power**: army; the word "forces" has a similar meaning.



186. **your eye:** Ross looks at Malcolm and means him by "your". (1) a sight of you. (2) a look from you; (1) being euphuistic is preferable as the meaning from Ross's lips.

188. **doff:** do off, remove.

192. **gives out:** (1) has to show. (2) proclaims, speaks of.

194. **would:** should.

195. **latch:** catch; nobody could hear them. **What . . . they:** these last words quicken Macduff's interest and he eagerly asks, "Do they concern my affairs?" He has not interrupted Ross all this while, because he was looking at, and addressing his talk to, Malcolm, avoiding Macduff's eyes.

196. **fee-grief:** grief that wholly concerns one person: grief held as it were, by one single person in *fee-simple*; which was an absolute tenure, whereas leasehold and copyhold were tenures that might at any time pass on to other holders.

198. **But . . . woe:** that does not share in the woe, out of sympathy for you, who are the chief sufferer; all who hear of it, mourn the loss that you have suffered.

202. **possess . . . with:** inform them of, put them in possession of.

204-207. Every trace of "fine" language vanishes in Ross, and he gives out the terrible news in plain, direct words, as the *kindest* way of putting an end to Macduff's prolonged torture of suspense; and this kindness has been strangely mistaken for brutality in the "arch-villain" Ross.

206. **quarry:** slaughtered game. **deer:** play of words with "dear," (dear ones): Elizabethan poetry often has this punning in the depths of tragic feeling, as an expression of intense pathos, but it seems strange to us.

207. It would kill you if I gave you the details of that slaughter.

208. Macduff does this to hide his gushing tears, and his face is distorted with grief.

209. Speak out your grief, for giving vent to grief in words relieves the heart; silence makes grief eat inwards and kills the sufferer.

212. **I must be:** it was cruelly fated that I should be.

213. These repeated enquiries (l. 211) after he has already been told, show that he cannot believe the whole truth at once:—"Not even if Macbeth was the perpetrator, could he have acted in *so diabolical* a manner," thinks Macduff.

214. us: for ourselves; for you, for me, and for all Scotland. great revenge: revenge for the public wrongs done to all Scotland, in which will be included your private revenge for wife and children, and mine, for a father; all murdered by the same hand, that now destroys our country.

215. To cure . . . grief: to revenge this personal wrong done to you, and heal the wound of your personal grief; Malcolm says the two revenges—public and private—will be taken at one and the same time, with one and the same blow.

215. He . . . children: he (Macbeth) has no children, and therefore he has never felt a father's feelings; if he had, he would have spared my children. We do not know whether Macbeth had ever been a father; history only tells us that Gruoch (Lady Macbeth) had a child by her former husband; and this may be the infant of which Lady Macbeth speaks early in the play; but we know that never once in the play has Macbeth by word or sign shown a father's feelings, though he has shown much longing for an heir to his throne. Two very mistaken meanings have been given:—(1), he (Macbeth) has no children; therefore to revenge myself, I cannot kill *his* children to avenge mine! The very shadow of such a diabolical thought could never have passed for a moment over Macduff's mind; the thought of revenge has not as yet even entered his mind; for his mind it is *wholly* taken up by the sense of his loss; he has not yet been able to bring himself to believe in the whole truth of its extent; and he still keeps repeating his question (ll. 217, 218); it would be as absurd to make Macduff add, with fiendish looks, "but he has a wife, and I will kill *her*"! (2) he (Malcolm) has no children; therefore he cannot feel as I do, but talks about "great revenge" on public grounds; the slender basis for this view is that Malcolm has spoken last, and Macduff is replying to him indirectly.



in the third person; but Macduff is so taken up with his own loss, that Malcolm's words have fallen on deaf ears, or if his ears hear them, his mind is insensible to their meaning.

216-219. These repeated questions show that he cannot bring himself to believe his ears; show that what he had "guessed" in l. 203, fell very short of what has happened, if what he is told can be true.

219. **dispute:** (1) resist your grief, don't let it overwhelm you. (2) fight your grief by taking your revenge on the causer of it. Foremost in every speech of his here (ll. 214, 219, 227) Malcolm's mind has before it the public wrongs of Scotland, as befits Scotland's future king; while foremost in Macduff's, or wholly filling it, are his personal wrongs. The case is here altered from what it was a short while ago, when Macduff was all for avenging Scotland's wrongs, Malcolm, all for looking after his own personal safety. **it:** your grief. I shall do so: There is a long pause before Macduff slowly utters these words; it is only now that he attends to Malcolm, and becomes sensible of the meaning of his words.

220. But I must first realize its full meaning; I must first feel its full force; I must dwell on it; I must indulge in it. We know that he *cannot* tear himself away from the subject.

222. **were:** are no more; once lived; no longer are alive; it is their memory only that now lives and is precious to me.

224. He taxes himself with not being near them at such a time; it was to punish him for this sin, that heaven did not interpose to save them, and he cannot, guilty soul, blame heaven for not interposing. Macduff's conscience smites him and he cannot forgive himself for a mistake which it magnifies into a sin and a crime, but for which we can readily forgive him; because neither he nor any one else, ever believed even Macbeth to be capable of killing innocent women and children. Thus then, does Macduff answer his wife's charge—"He loves us not"—when she cannot hear his answer on earth; but from where she now is, who can doubt that she hears him, and acquits him? And thus too does Macduff answer those critics



who charge him with "cowardice," and, in consequence, "don't care a straw for him," as one of them actually says.

226. **Heaven . . . now:** may God give them rest and peace now. With these words of farewell to his dead wife and children. Macduff at last tears himself away from them; but henceforth, till he enters with Macbeth's severed head in his hand, the thought of revenge for them never ceases to glow like molten are in the furnace of his bereaved heart; while only now at last he turns with gradually growing attention to Malcolm.

227. Malcolm's quick eye has seen how this personal outrage on Macduff's feelings, will add a fresh incentive to his feelings for his country, and that the husband and father will, in him, join the patriot; and these three speeches of Malcolm's are directed towards keeping that incentive alive; for he feels most as a king should, Macduff, most as a man.

229. I could shed tears, but I will not.

230. I could speak of revenge, but I will not.

231. God in heaven, who feelest for the murdered innocents ("gentle"), permit no delay, no intervention.

232. But, do thou bring me at once face to face with the murderer, and my sword will speak for me. **intermission:** (1) delay, "*cut short*" supports this meaning (2) intervention, interposition, interference; this is an older meaning (as it still means in the law term "*intromit*") and is more forcible than meaning (1). Macduff's mind is fixed upon one point—"let him not escape *my* hand," "let not the hand of *another* slay him"; and accordingly Macduff, in the battle that ensues, reserves his own sword for Macbeth alone.

233. 234. I shall make his escape from my vengeance as impossible as his escape from God's wrath is; my vengeance on his accursed life will be as sure as God's wrath on his accursed soul; and if he escapes me, may he escape God's just wrath, and may God forgive him. Macbeth's poetry has drawn forth much admiring comment, but I do not find any notice taken of Macduff's stern vow. **This . . . manly:** this is speaking like a man, and it sounds like very



sweet music in my ears. Malcolm is elated at his success with Macduff in getting him to join him in the work that will be both a "great revenge" for Scotland, and a "medicine" for healing his own "deadly grief". **tune:** frame of mind that makes you speak so.

235. **power:** army, forces.

236. It only remains for us to take leave of king Edward.

237. **ripe:** Macbeth is a fruit ripe on a tree; but surely he is a poison fruit growing on a poison tree—the *upas* tree of Scotland.

238. **put on:** set to work. **powers above:** God in heaven. **their instruments:** these consist of *two* armies:—(1) one, human:—the Scottish forces under Malcolm, the English forces under Siward and the rebel Scottish forces about to join them—all three taken together; and (2) the other, supernatural:—an invisible army of warrior angels, sent by Heaven to aid the cause of Divine vengeance upon Macbeth. On his side, Macbeth stands alone, already deserted by the supernatural powers of hell and the agents of Evil, and soon to be deserted by a human army, whom fear alone keeps, reluctant, on his side. Malcolm's imagination may well have dwelt upon the support of that second army.

238. **what cheer:** such consolation, such lessening of your grief, as is possible so soon after it has pierced your heart.

## ACT V

### SCENE 1

**Dunsinane:** see IV. ii. Note at end. This castle was situated on a hill, ten miles from Perth. This Scene, one critic thinks, is, in ll. 1-73, in blank verse really, though apparently printed as prose; another thinks it should be in blank verse, because it is so sublime. It neither is, nor should



be, in blank verse, and it is not sublime: the speeches of the Doctor and the Gentlewoman, are prosaic statements of matters of fact, and Lady Macbeth's are disconnected, disjointed in thought, and interrupted by silent actions; and the whole is terrifying, horrific, not sublime, in its effect.

2. **your report:** that about her sleep-walking.

4-8. Her connection with her husband's crimes began with those letters in Act I, of which that read out in it recurs to her diseased imagination; and she writes to him in reply; his letter was written to her after victory; her reply goes when he has now gone forth to defeat and death.

4. **the field:** Macbeth had, first, marched out into the open country against the army of the rebel thanes; but, on the news of the approach of the English army, he withdrew to within his Castle (in Scene iii).

11. **effects of watching:** acts that one can do in one's waking hours. "wake" and "watch" are the same word in meaning.

13. **actual:** in act, as opposed to "in speech".

15. I will not repeat what she said. **after her:** in her own words.

16. **to me:** as to a privileged person, I being her physician, and therefore entitled to hear from you in confidence.

19. I cannot do so, since having nobody to corroborate what I repeat as spoken by her, I run the risk of incriminating myself, as making false statements.

20. **guise:** manner, way.

21. **stand close:** stand aside, so as to be hidden from view.

24. **light . . . continually:** for darkness brings back to her mind, with intolerable vividness, the night of the murder; on that night she had invoked darkness to come to her aid; now she cannot endure to be left in darkness.

26. You see her eyes are open, and therefore you were mistaken when you said she was fast asleep.

27. **sense is:** "*sense are*" in Folio i.e. senses (monosyllable in pronunciation) are; i.e. the sense of each eye is.

32. Up to now Lady Macbeth has gone through some of her habitual actions during her sleep-walkings, in silence.

33. And now she speaks what she has spoken often before during these actions; and the doctor hears from her own lips what the nurse refused to repeat to him. Yet... **spot:** she once thought a little water would wash all the blood off; and yet, after years, one spot of blood will not be washed off, but sticks, as her diseased imagination makes her think it does.

38. **Hell is murky:** When she was planning the crime, the immediate present—its success—was the one thing that engrossed her; its later consequences, after success, broke her down; and now in these the last days of her life on earth, its *last consequence*, yet to come beyond the grave, looms before her; the murkiness of that night of crime, now reappears to her as the murkiness of the place where that crime is to be finally punished; before she arrives at that place she has a fearful foretaste of it in the "*inward hell*" which that crime has created within her, as Mrs. Jameson in one of her happiest expressions makes this cry break from. Contrasted to her present state of mind stands Macbeth's; for him this last consequence in the next world has no terrors, but he will "lightly jump the life to come".

39. **Fie...afraid:** her mind rambles from thought to thought; and here she is thinking of Macbeth's refusal to go back—"I'll go no more"—and of her sharp rejoinder.

40. **What need...account:** this is another disjointed recollection; it is that of a talk they must have had some time before or after the election, when Macbeth may have told her of his fears that Banquo might reveal all that he knew; and she had replied that nobody dare speak out as long as they knew they were within Macbeth's power.

42. Macbeth, at the time, dared not to go back to the bloody scene he himself had created; but he soon got over his fear, and began to make that river of blood flow for him



to wade in; she at the time, dared to go, and saw that bloody sight; and it had been deeply seared into her brain, and the sear shows itself now.

43. **Do . . . that:** of course this is plain proof of *who* were Duncan's murderers.

44. Her mind wanders to another subject.

45. And back to the blood spot.

46. And forward again to the banquet scene—"mar . . . starting".

49. You (the lady-in-waiting) have heard, from her own lips, of her complicity in her husband's first crime, (for l. 43 taken with l. 33, shows it). Macbeth had planned and plotted that, not he, but others should be taken to be the perpetrators of his crimes, but in vain; for, sooner or later, all the world knew that he was the sole perpetrator of one after another of them, and had pursued him, wretched man, with the infamy and execrations that he had sought to escape. Lady Macbeth is spared this pain; no one suspected her all this time; and it is only now, in her last days on earth, and when she is out of her mind, and cannot feel that pain, that from her own lips comes the revelation of her complicity in that first crime.

53. **perfumes:** there is a touch of the woman even in this trifling matter; the smell offends her, and she would have it removed with perfumes. **this little hand:** this is the only reference in the play to her personal appearance. Was Lady Macbeth large-built, or small in person? Those who look to her actions alone, and that only in that first crime, and make her out therefrom to be a fiend and a monster in character, would prefer to have her big in person; those who look below her actions, into the workings of her thoughts, not only in the first, but also in the other two great acts of murder, those of Banquo and the Macduffs, in which she had no part and no previous knowledge, see in her a highly strung sensibility, and a rapid nervous breakdown, and prefer to take her to be a small, slightly built woman; for as we judge *ex pede Herculem*, Hercules by his foot, so we judge her—

*ex manu Lady Macbeth*—from her hand. There is no self-admiration in her words, but the pain of despair—"so small the hands, and yet so much water has not made them clean!"

58. **dignity . . . body:** as queen of Scotland. Here then is a serving woman who would refuse to be a queen on such terms as her mistress had become one—a crown upon her head with a hell within her heart; so too would that porter prefer to be a porter, enjoying his drink and his tips, to being a king at the price his master has paid—the curses of a whole people laid on his head.

59. **Well . . . well:** things are taking a most unexpected turn; who would have thought so?

60. **it be:** it be well, though it looks very ill; may things turn out to be well, though they look very ugly.

61. **beyond my practice:** the doctor here puts up his note-book, that he had taken out at l. 34 to record, on the spot, his diagnosis of the case.

63. **holily:** without ever being involved in any crime. **in . . . beds:** peacefully and after receiving the last rites of religion.

67. **Even so:** Why, this is confession of yet another crime. The meaning of l. 47, "mar . . . starting", then not understood by the doctor, is now clear to him.

70. **What . . . undone:** she had, in her waking hours, expressed the same thought—"what's done is done", as she does here in her sleep; then it was in apathy, now it is in despair.

74. **Foul whisperings:** muttered suspicious of foul deeds done.

75. **unnatural troubles:** sufferings like those I have just witnessed, that are not in the course of ordinary sufferings in human diseases. **infected:** tainted with a consciousness of crime.

76. Will talk, when asleep in bed, of their crimes.

77. **the divine:** to minister to her guilty conscience and her diseased soul.



79. **annoyance**: bodily harm; the doctor fears she might attempt suicide; this foreshadows to us what is actually to occur; unless she died of sheer nervous exhaustion.

80. Never lose sight of her, to guard against any such attempt.

81. **mated**: stupefied; "mate" is shortened from "check-mate," a curious misspelling for "*Shah-mat*" (Pers.) "the king is dead", in the game of chess; "mate," to pair, one of a pair, is a different word.

82. They both now know of her complicity, hitherto a secret, in her husband's crime, and both seem to mean to keep their knowledge to themselves (through fear of their own safety, if they speak it out). Was Lady Macbeth spared so far that others did not come to know of it later on? Malcolm when he speaks of her as "fiend-like," V, vii, 98, must have known it, to call her so; our pity for her (we have none for her husband), makes us hope that he knew of it after her death, when she was beyond the reach of pain.

## SCENE 2

This scene has its share in the action of the play, as has been shown in the *Introduction*, and its "rejection," as irrelevant to it, is a mistake. These thanes have taken a slight part or none hitherto in the action; they now come into it as the chief ones among many other thanes, who have risen against Macbeth, and so represent them in the action. Nowadays we should say that this scene described proceedings at a meeting of the General Staff of the rebel Scottish army, in which young Lennox, by his superior intelligence, takes the lead, naturally, as, in our modern formal language, the Chief of the Staff; but of an army whose (future) commander-in-chief, Malcolm, is far away in England. This meeting ends with a Resolution to issue an Army Order for a general advance; this is carried out, as the next scene shows. Of course these rebel forces of those days consisted of clansmen



under the lead of their respective thanes, and had none of the formal organization of a modern army.

2. **uncle**: this should be grand-uncle, according to Holinshead; but as there is a young Siward to match young Malcolm, and fight by his side, so an old Siward is made the leader of an army that is to avenge old Duncan; for which work a *grand*-uncle would be too old, and so is made less old, as uncle. **the good Macduff**: and with him in the vigilant, clear-headed Lennox, the gentle Ross, the plain-spoken Angus, the "dour" Menteith, the "douce" Caithness, the soldier-stoic Siward, the soldier-martyr, his son, the masterful Malcolm, the saintly Edward—what an army of some virtue or other personified, is also marching against vice and crime, embodied in the single black figure of Macbeth, the Wronger and Criminal! (Edward in person does not join in this march, but *his virtue* does). There are the Wronged, who look, from beyond the grave, upon this march of the Avengers who are to right their wrongs:—the gracious Duncan, the two innocent grooms, the noble Banquo, the child-hero, little Macduff, the other little Macduffs, the bereaved Lady Macduff, doubly bereaved both of life and of children, and a crowd of thousands more, nameless,—all, the victims of that black murderer, Macbeth.

3. **Revenge**: (plural) each having his own revenge to take; and each representing besides, many and many others, nameless and unknown, and unable to avenge themselves, whom these two and their "powers" will avenge, to satisfy this crying demand. Macbeth deserved to be killed in more than a "hundred and fifty ways," and with more than many a thousand "mortal murders on his crown!" Yet, with so many seeking for his life. Providence reserves him for the sword of one alone—he, the most wronged among the living.

4. **bleeding**: caused by bloodshed. **alarm**: call to arms; Ital. *allarme!* to (the) arms.

4, 5. Would call upon the very dead to take up arms against this cruel bloodshed, and take a grim revenge on it.

These two lines have been strangely misunderstood to mean "would call upon religious ascetics to take up arms and commit deeds of bloodshed"! Neither is there any reference in "bleeding" to the superstition that a corpse bled afresh in the presence of the murderer. We have seen that the murdered victims of Macbeth are watching the march of the avenging army; Menteith's fiery nature pictures *the dead* as joining the living, in taking an active share in that work of revenge; as fighting to right the wrongs done to themselves and to others; among these Menteith thinks of Duncan and of Banquo in particular, not forgetting the two poor grooms, besides thousands of less note whom Macbeth had caused to be murdered, of whom we know nothing more. What an army in the imagination, then, is pictured here, as on the march against Macbeth:—the Angels Militant of Heaven, the Living on Earth, the Dead risen from their Graves! *excite . . . man:* call forth, summon the dead from the grave. *mortified man:* the dead; this has been feebly mistaken to mean an ascetic called forth from his cell where he practises self-mortification.

6. *well:* happily; the meeting of the two armies would bode well to Scotland. *gentry:* thanes and lairds.

8. This is a prompt reply from one in possession of better information. *file:* list; Lennox has a record of information, that he here produces, obtained from all parts of Scotland, and from the head-quarters of the English army; while Angus, Menteith and Caithness can give only local information from their own thanedoms, and of the state of local feeling there; but all the information thus produced agrees in showing the people as rising every where in rebellion, Macbeth's troops as deserting him, or continuing to serve him only through fear; Macbeth himself has run mad, or thought to be so, condemning himself, aware that he is hated and shunned. On this information, they resolve to march forward, and offer their allegiance to Malcolm, now with the advancing English force, with others of the thanes, like Macduff and Ross, who are refugees in England.



10, 11. Young Englishmen, as yet merely smooth-faced boys, are giving proofs of manhood for the first time ("even now"), by joining the army of invasion. It is befitting that young men should thus respond to the call, in the just cause of the young Malcolm.

12. Macbeth has been forced to retire from the open field to within the shelter of the castle; the Scottish rebel army have followed his retreat, are now in the neighbourhood, but think it prudent to effect a junction first with the advancing British forces, before attacking the fortress. **Great:** the stronghold of.

14. **valiant fury:** valour run mad; not true valour, which is sane, deliberate; this is madness in a lesser degree than the stark madness meant by "*mad*" in l. 13.

15, 16. (1) reading "**cause**": Macbeth cannot act sanely, rationally, because his cause is a diseased one; his extravagant actions show that he feels his cause to be rotten, to have been *not* "for his own good". (2) reading "**course**": his extravagant course of actions shows a diseased state of mind, call it what you will, "*madness*", or "*valiant fury*". (3) taking "**cause**" to mean those who adhere to his cause: those who still serve him are becoming unruly, tainted with disaffection. This explanation is wrong because the point here is the state of Macbeth's own mind and the character of his actions; and the point here is not the state of his army; that point is dealt with in ll. 17-19, and (3) applies there rightly, not here. **buckle:** restrain, control. **belt:** restraint, guidance. Contrast Caithness's homely metaphor with Menteith's impetuous one—a belt and buckle, with an army of the dead. **rule:** the rule of Reason.

17. **sticking:** as the blood did to his wife's hands.

19, 20. Those who still keep with him only obey his orders, but have no love for him or his cause. **title:** usurped title.

22. **thief:** who has stolen the robe; so does Swift make the wizened little face of Dryden peep out of the ample dimensions of Virgil's helmet, that he had stolen and put



on. Contrast again, with the two metaphors above, the malicious humour of that of Angus. These thanes, though they play minor parts, have each a distinctive character, and are not flattened pancakes, all looking alike flat; nor are their speeches algebraically permutable and combinable; both of which mistakes critics have made.

23-25. There is rebellion within Macbeth, in his own breast, as there is rebellion outside in his kingdom; for the very faculties of his mind revolt against him, with the result of driving him mad. **pester'd senses:** (1) the faculties of his mind that are constrained to serve him like unwilling slaves, confined, hampered; to "pester" is originally to hobble a horse when put into a field of "*pasture*"; a contraction of "*empester*," Lat. *in*, on, and *pastorium*, clog or hobble for animals let out to pasture; Lat. *pascere*, to feed. (2) his mind, tortured with thoughts of his crimes: to "pester" here being used in its modern meaning, to harass. **recoil and start:** in rebellion, refuse to serve him.

24. When all his senses, feelings, faculties became conscious of being in the wrong for belonging to and serving a man like him. **within:** in him, within his mind; as opposed to those other rebels without him—namely his rebellious subjects.

25. **for . . . there:** for serving, for belonging to, such a creature.

26-28. **where . . . medicine . . . him:** all three words mean Malcolm. This, then, is the declaration of allegiance to their lawful king, made by these assembled thanes.

27. **medicine:** (1) physician, healer; Fr. *medecin*; doctor; (2) physic, healing remedy; Fr. *medecine*, remedy. **weal:** commonwealth, common welfare, body politic.

28. **in:** towards, for. **purge:** purification, deliverance from this plague of tyranny.

29. **of us:** of our blood. **so much:** Caithness in the warmth of his patriotism spoke somewhat hyperbolically of *every* drop of their blood; Lennox promptly brings him

back to reason—not all, but only as much as is needed, of our blood; all of which cannot be given, for, then, none will remain alive to enjoy the fruit of the sacrifice! Menteith's mind is fiery, Angus's homely, Caithness's mild, Lennox's always practical, reasonable.

30. **dew**: bedew, help the bud to open and blossom.  
**sovereign**: a pun, (1) the all-healing sovereign remedy.  
(2) Malcolm, the future sovereign ruler. **the . . . flower**:  
Malcolm's rule. **the weeds**: Macbeth's rule.

31. **Birnam**: the headquarters or general staffs of the two advancing armies had been in correspondence, and this was the place of junction agreed upon.

### SCENE 3

*Macbeth's "Valiant Fury".* What was said in the last scene about Macbeth's being nearly mad, is proved by facts given in this, to have been true:—Men continue to desert from him, to join the rebel army; he seeks for comfort in the prediction about Birnam wood, and relying on it, he will continue to fight even if all deserted him, and he is left alone; he is given the news of the approach of an English army in support of the rebels; the bearing of him who brings that news, and the bearing of the few that still remain about him, make him feel his desolation, inspite of his boast, even before he is left quite alone; while the other side is gathering fresh strength, he only hears curses from his subjects, and lip-service from his attendants; he is told of the state of the queen's mind; he hardly notices it, but asks the doctor who tells him of it, whether he has no medicine to cure the state of his own diseased mind, no medicine to cure the state of his diseased kingdom; he becomes restless, putting on and putting off his armour; and, last of all, he falls back upon that prediction, as the only medicine that will cure him and his kingdom.

1. **them**: the thanes (1.7) with their clansmen who are deserting him one by one, in a stream, that makes him say "*'all'*".

3. **taint** : be tainted.

5. **Scan** : All mór | tál conse | quences háve | prónoun-c'd | mè thús | ; "consequences," two syllables, the —e— of —se—being merged, and the—s of —es being silent as if the plural was "consquens." **mortal consequences**: events that will befall mortals in the course of time.

8. **epicures**: the frugal way of living among the Scots made them think the English to be too fond of good living; they are charged with "gormandizing" and "riotous surfeit" by Boece in Holinshed.

9. **I sway by**: I am swayed by, the firm belief (in the prediction) that guides me.

10. **sag**: droop. **doubt**: join with "mind". **fear**: join with "heart," if these two words are given their present meanings; but if "doubt" is given its older meaning of "fear," then the two sentences mean the same thing, repeated for emphasis.

11. **cream-fac'd**: with a face white with fear. **loon**: fool; commoner in Lowland Scotch than in English.

14. **over-red**: paint over with red.

15. **lily-liver'd**: white livered; with no blood in your liver (which was once fancied to be the seat of courage; so, in Hindustani, fear is said to "turn the liver into water"). **patch**: fool; from the patchy or motley dress worn by clowns on the stage.

11-17. It is Macbeth's dread of hearing more bad news that makes him talk thus without ceasing, so that he might delay the man in delivering his report, by assailing him with this torrent of abuse, to get a few minutes' respite. **Are . . . fear**: (1) infect with like fear those who see them. (2) are an outward expression of secret fear. Fear entrusts her heart's secret to these confidants, the "cheeks", but they betray it, with their tell-tale pallor. **counsellors**: confidants, those entrusted with a secret for safe-keeping; "counsel" in older



English meant a secret, as it still does in the expression "keep one's counsel".

19. **I . . . at heart:** my heart sinks within me, but I dare not show it in my face. **When I behold:** he was going to say "when I see how people around me fear me and shun me" (as this aide-de-camp is doing now), but he cannot bring himself to utter the whole of that unpalatable truth; and so breaks off.

19. He has to call repeatedly to this officer-in-waiting before the latter answers the call; for he is reluctant to face his violence of manner, and loathes to approach him from knowledge of his crimes; and this silent action of Seyton completes his master's broken off sentence, and proves its truth.

20. **push:** (1) attempt to push me off the throne. (2) crisis, vigorous attack.

21. (1) Reading "**will cheer . . . disseat me now**": will, if it fails, leave me happy for the rest of my life ("ever"); or, if it succeeds, will unseat me from the throne at once ("now"), and for good. **cheer:** relieve me of that sickness of heart I now feel, l. 19. It is misplaced purism to enforce a rigid consistency of metaphor, by reading here either (2) "**will chair . . . disseat**" or (3) "**will cheer . . . disease . . .**"; for "chair" means to place on a chair, and not fix firmly on a chair, which must be the forced meaning with this reading, and "disease" is too feeble a word for him to use, when he expects nothing less than death.

22. (1) reading "**way of life**": the course of my life. (2) reading "**may of life**": the spring season of my life; this would be too much indulgence in poetry even for Macbeth; for, in the play, we see him long after he has passed his May of life, though his reign is much shortened, in order to make his appalling cruelty and vices and crimes still more appalling, by making them run their "way" or course within a very few months or a few years—we don't know which. In Holinshed, Macbeth reigns for seventeen long years.

23. Has declined to its autumn of faded and falling leaves; these "leaves," in their greenness, were the enjoyments of life that he expected from the commission of his crimes, but those he never enjoyed, or enjoyed for a very short while; these "leaves," now faded and falling, are the ills of life that are now coming thick and fast upon him.

24. **old age:** this need not necessarily mean that Macbeth in the play is now an old man, though he is that in Holinshed.

25. These are the enjoyments of life that he had hoped for to "cheer" his old age when it came.

26, 27. These are the ills that his course ("way") of life has actually brought upon him. **not loud:** muttered low through fear. **but deep:** but coming from the depths of the hearts of those thousands that had felt, or still fear, the heavy weight of his tyranny. **mouth-honour:** lip-service, such as he gets from attendants. **breath:** mere words, without true honour or respect underlying them.

22-28. Macbeth's lament may move our pity, but not much. He too has a "hell within him", but it is very different from Lady Macbeth's: his hell is all caused by the loss of the enjoyment of the "good things" of earth, for which alone he longed; her's were caused by the terrible vision of the next life in store for her—"Hell is murky"—; while he was ready to "jump that life to come", with a light heart.

28. **poor heart:** those who serve me with fear and trembling, as this Seyton and this messenger have just now shown they do.

31. **What news more:** a few minutes ago he had said that he wanted to hear no more reports; now, he asks for more news.

33. **Tis . . . yet:** the man reminds him there is no need for him to put on armour now, as the enemy is yet too far off.

35. Send out more cavalry as scouts to bring me news. **horses:** cavalry; we should now say "horse" in this collective sense. **skirr:** scour, send out scouts into.

39. This is all the notice he takes of his wife's reported illness; and he does not enquire after her till now, though the doctor has been waiting all this time to make his report.

40-45. This enquiry may apply as much to the state of his own mind as to that of his wife's; the doctor's reply takes it as a general enquiry about *any* diseased mind, for he replies with the general word "*himself*" which here means "one's self", man or woman; had he taken the enquiry to be one about Lady Macbeth alone, he would have replied with the word "*herself*"; and Macbeth's rejoinder "*I'll*" points to himself, not to Lady Macbeth, as one who refuses any "*physic*".

Scan : Cánst thóu | nòt minis | tèr tò | à mind | diséas'd | ;  
first-foot doubly stressed, spondee, third unstressed, pyrrhic.

42. **written . . . brain:** troubles written on the brain.

43. **Oblivious:** causing oblivion.

44. **stuff'd . . . stuff:** critics have been needlessly offended by this repetition, forgetting that the repetition of the same idea by both verb and noun redoubles its force, and shows how heavy that "*weight upon the heart*" is; the emendations proposed enfeeble this force. Malone quotes numerous similar repetitions from the plays, which have the same or an analogous effect.

47. A minute ago he asked for medicine, and now he will have none of it, and a minute after he asks for it again!

39-60. Within these few minutes, he gives proofs of the restlessness of his mind thus:—He asks the doctor for medicine for himself, for his wife, throws medicine to the dogs, hurries the armourer or the squire to arm him, asks for medicine for his kingdom, flings off his armour, orders it to be brought after him, sallies out of the room with his old cry about the prediction upon his lips:—that prediction that is his last and *only trusted medicine*!

48. **staff:** staff of office; what we would now-a-days call a field marshal's *baton*, or what in Shakespeare's times great commanders in war carried, as we see in portraits. In his last hours when real power is slipping out of his hands, Macbeth

shows an eager vanity to parade the insignia of office, and to hold it in those hands. It is putting a petty request in his lips to explain "staff" to mean lance-shaft; it is besides altogether incorrect; for in that case the word should have been "*the*" staff not "*my*"; for "*my*" indicates something that distinguishes him from others; the *baton* would distinguish him so, a mere spear-shaft would not.

49. **send out**: send out scouting parties, repeating his order of 1. 35.

50. **dispatch**: be quick with the armour; said to the attendant squire or armourer.

51. **cast the water**: examine the urine; a method of diagnosis. **my land**: my kingdom.

54. **again**: back. **it**: some part of the armour that the squire had put on him, or the whole of it.

56. **these English**: this is the disease, the plague, that has fallen upon his kingdom, for deliverance from which he asks for a purgative; as, for relief from the sickening memories of the past, he had asked for an emetic 1. 44.

58. **something**: something of them. **bring . . . . . me**: Having put on his armour, having had it pulled off, he now orders it to be brought after him, meaning to put it on later. **on the battlements**, where we find him next.

59. **bane**: the poison of defeat; he has no fear here, either for his life or for his victory; shortly after, he despairs of both.

61. Birnam wood may come to Dunsinane, if it likes, but if I were once out of Dunsinane, nothing would induce **me** to come back to it. **profit**: the lucrative office of physician to the king.

II: 2 & 60. The scene opened with these words, and it now closes with them; in its course Macbeth has thought of many remedies and rejected them; this prediction alone holds its ground in his mind as the one sovereign remedy.



## SCENE 4

The two armies have joined hands; and Malcolm has now assumed the chief command of the rebel Scottish army; we shall soon see that, after this junction on Scottish soil, Siward has, out of deference to the lawful king of Scotland, assumed the position of second in command under him.

2. **chambers:** this is a lurid reminder of a *sleeping* chamber, from the lips of the murdered Duncan's son, and of the reason why this army is now before the castle of his murderer.

4-7. What a chance thought, what a simple device, overthrow that last hope that it cost such elaborate rites to raise ! Birnam wood is 12 or 15 miles from Dunsinane, with the Tay between; and history or legend gives other instances of similar stratagems practised, ranging from Scotland and England to Arabia.

4. This order, on which the whole issue of war and battle rests, is given by Malcolm, and is obeyed by both the united armies, showing that he is now in supreme command.

6. **discovery:** discoverers; the mounted scouts that Macbeth had sent out.

8. **other:** other report.

9. **keeps still:** (1) still holds out, though driven from the open country to within shelter of his castle. (2) stays quiet. In either case the meaning is that Macbeth is still confident enough not to have taken to flight, after the junction of the two armies, the defection of thanes, and the desertion of common soldiers. **setting down:** siege; which word literally means a seat, as it does in French.

11, 12. (1) Folio reading "*given*" 1. 11, is a corruption from "*given*" 1. 12. (2) readings "*taken*," "*got*," "*gone*": all mean the same thing in substance:—Wherever there was an opportunity ("*advantage*") to be had for leaving the castle ("*to be gone*"), men of all ranks, from thanes to common soldiers, have deserted him. **For:** because the opportunity for desertion is greater in the open country than it is from within a fort-



ress; Macbeth's best hope lies in shutting up his troops within his castle.

13. **things**: wretched creatures, without a will of their own to serve him, and without an opportunity to desert him; the desertion had taken place largely before he shut himself up with his army in the castle; and those that took place after, were again mostly of those for whom he could not find room enough within the castle, to keep them confined hard and fast.

14. **hearts . . . too**: in their *hearts* the remnants of Macbeth's garrison have already gone over to Malcolm, though in their *bodies* they cannot go over to him, as the successful deserters from the garrison, and from the field force before this have done—namely, gone over both in body and in heart ("too"). In short, the whole garrison is disaffected.

14-16. This is the time for vigorous action ("industrious soldiership"); after such action has decided the question at issue ("true event"), we shall be able to form a correct opinion ("just censure") about the attitude of the garrison towards Macbeth. **true**: (1) certain, sure to end only in one way. (2) decisive on the side of truth and right.

17. **due** : on the side of truth and right; same as "true" (2) above.

18. **we have . . . we owe**: the credit and debit side of our account; our gains and our losses.

19. **speculative**: conjectural; Malcolm has been speaking in too sanguine a tone about the disaffected spirit of Macbeth's remaining troops, and though in nominal chief command, the younger man silently submits to the wiser and more moderate counsels of the two more experienced soldiers. Each speaks in character: Malcolm is sanguine of hope, Macduff is for immediate action, leaving hope to take care of itself, Siward is for cautious action, with an eye to making the final result, not a hope, but a certainty; the one acting like Outram, "the fearless," the other, like Colin Campbell, the "old *khabardar*"; both of the Indian Mutiny.

20. **certain**: "true" (1) in 1. 16, decisive.



## SCENE 5

1. **outward walls:** where they will be more conspicuous to the enemy, as a defiant signal of "No surrender."
2. **the cry:** raised by the men on the battlements, as they see the distant movements of the enemy, as yet too far from them to make out anything about the camouflage .
3. **lie:** be encamped under my impregnable walls.
5. **forc'd:** reinforced. **those . . . ours:** the deserters from me.
6. I would have sallied out and offered them battle in the open field. Contrast this continuation of Macbeth's "valiant fury," (everyone of his boasts made here is falsified) with the temperate counsels of Siward and the strenuous ones of Macduff, just above.
10. **has been:** once was, but no longer is, when. **cool'd:** been chilled through fear. Towards the end of his life, hardened by a career of crime, Macbeth's mind recurs to the days of early life, when as a boy his feelings had the acute sensibility that this career had blunted and nearly killed. Falstaff, on his deathbed, after leading for long years the life of an unprincipled voluptuary, similarly gives us a glimpse into his innocent boyhood.
11. **night-shriek:** such as that from a human voice through sudden terror, or that from the cries of birds of ill-omen, or from the wailings of wraiths, banshees and such like-supernatural beings of superstition. **fell:** scalp, head of hair.
12. There was a time when the mere reading of a book about witches, or ghosts, or murders, would unnerve me. When a boy, Macbeth, then, was fond of reading what we would now call "penny dreadfuls"; and we have seen that this morbid taste, had had a frightful development, in manhood, into enacting in cold blood the crimes and horrors, the mere reading about which used once to shock and terrify him.
13. **As:** as if. **with:** upon. **I . . . horrors:** I have had a surfeit of enacting deeds of horror.



15. **start:** startle. At the moment when his wife's sensitive nature has brought her to the point of laying violent hands on herself, Macbeth tells us how callous *his* nature has become—and through the same cause, in his case as in hers.

17. **She . . . hereafter:** well, she was sure to die some day or other, hereafter, if not now; therefore it makes little difference that she has died now, instead of dying later on. Never once has Macbeth shown love for his wife *for her own sake*; where he has shown it, it has been as towards a partner in his ambition; when she ceased to be such a partner, his "love" too ceased for her; estrangement followed, and pitying contempt, as if she was a child, when they met, which now was seldom; and, last, a libertine course of life on his part, and now indifference at her death. **should:** (1) would certainly was sure to; a misunderstanding of this meaning of the word has led to a mistaken interpretation of this line to mean "she should have died later on, when I would have time to show my respect and love for her, by honouring her memory," by a magnificent funeral, presumably! The use of "should" for "would" is common in Elizabethan English; (2) even if we give it its modern meaning, that of the line would be this:—"This was not the time for her to go and die, when I have other things to attend to"; spoken with a feeling of impatience, not of "respect" and "love". He had kept the doctor waiting, while he talked on other matters, for thirty-six lines in scene iii, before he asked him how she was; and here he says she should have waited till he had leisure from these present urgent matters, before she thought of dying. This is a brutal statement of his feelings towards her, but it is the true one.

18. That word "is dead" was sure to be connected with her name, some day or other; and it matters little whether today or hereafter.

19. **tomorrow:** tomorrow after tomorrow to which we looked forward, day after day, with hope; and, day after day, met with disappointment.



20. **petty pace:** space of twenty four hours only at a time.

21. To the last moment of a man's life, of the hopes and the disappointments of which he has kept a record in his memory. **recorded:** remembered; It. *ricordare*, to remember. Lat. *cor*, heart.

22. **yesterdays:** after a "tomorrow" has come and been a "today", and gone and become a "yesterday". **have lighted:** have lured on with hopes now found to be false, like a will o'the wisp, or *ignis fatuus*, the fool's light. **fools:** men and women who find themselves cheated out of their hopes, when "tomorrow" has become "yesterday", "Such a fool has been she who is now dead" is what Macbeth thinks; and such a fool, he begins to think, (and we know for certain) that he himself will shortly be.

23. **dusty death:** death that reduces them to the dust from which they sprang; "dust thou art, and to dust returnest". **brief candle:** man's short life on earth.

25-28. He speaks from his own experience, which tells him that he also has been one of these fools; he has strutted and fretted and led a life full of sound and fury, and now he sees himself to have been nothing better than a knave, a vagabond player, an idiot, a *nothing*.

31. **which saw:** which I am sure I saw.

32. **But . . . it:** but I cannot find words to describe what I saw.

34. **anon:** suddenly; it seemed to him to move so, because he caught sight of it suddenly; of course, the "wood" must have been moving for sometime before he saw it doing so.

35. Macbeth's cry shows that he feels the shock of the first blow to his last hope.

37. **this three mile:** within three miles distance from the castle; the plural, being implied in the numeral, is not repeated in the noun; so "twelve year since" in the *Tempest*.

38. **I say:** I repeat, I am sure.

40. **cling thee:** shrivel or dry thee up; the orig. mean



ing; a lingering death from starvation, while hung alive on the gibbet, is meant, "cling" meaning stick close is a later usage.

42. **pull in:** (1) rein in, check. (2) reading "pall in", grow pale in, grow faint in. **resolution:** resoluteness, confidence in my destiny.

43. Macbeth's trust in one part of the prediction now dies and that in the other begins to falter.

45, 46. Scan: Dò cóme | tò Dún— | .....

Co"mes | towards Dún— | .....; accent on "come", "comes" in both lines, doubly accented monosyllable in the second line, "towards", is a monosyllable, and **out:** and sally out of the castle; his boast of ll. 2-4 is now shown to have been a mistaken one.

47. **this:** the moving wood. **appear:** turns out to be rue.

48. To attempt flight or to stand a siege, are both impossible.

50. I would like to see the sun extinguished, and the earth left in darkness. **estate:** the order of this universe; he would like things to be reduced to chaos in this world, before he leaves it; he had expressed the same charitable wish once before in IV, i, 52 sq.; so all-devouring is the selfishness that has possessed him.

52. **harness:** armour; the original meaning. **At least:** if I am to die; he despairs of his life now; he had no fears about it a short while ago, V, iii, 59. He will sell his life dear; this is not a proof of courage, as critics take it, but of the ferocity of despair, as we shall see.

#### SCENE 6

1-4. Malcolm rises further in importance; as commander-in-chief, he gives out the order of battle to both armies, English and Scotch; and as king, uses the royal "we". **battle:** division or wing of the joint army in battle array: Siward is to lead the first line of battle to the attack. Malcolm



and Macduff are to lead the second line in support, as arranged by Malcolm in his general army order.

6. **Fare . . . well**: he takes leave of the king and of Macduff, when going to face the chances of battle, that might make this to be his last farewell to them.

7. **Do . . . but**: if we only can. **power**: army. **tonight**: Holinshed says the advance from Birnam wood under cover of the ruse of the boughs, took place at night, so that the attacking army might be close upon the enemy, before the trick was discovered; it was discovered when they were only three miles off, and had thus cut off Macbeth's chances of a flight, (as he himself has said). In the Chronicle the battle takes place next morning; here in the play it evidently begins in the small hours of the night, and the difference is not great. **find**: meet; it is still dark.

8. "We mean to fight", says old Siward quietly, but he puts this resolution into the form of a rhymed couplet!

9, 10. Macduff roars out this truculent order; but he too does it in rhyme!

#### SCENE 7

1. **I cannot fly**: it looks as if Macbeth, on seeing the strength of the enemy, when it unmasks, or rather *unboughed*, itself, had tried to escape, but was prevented; if so, another of his boasts of valiant fury comes to nothing. In the chronicle, he succeeds in escaping alone by himself, is pursued by Macduff, alone too, is, after a long, unflagging, chase, brought to bay, and ignominiously slain by him. **tied . . . stake**: as bears were, in the cruel sport of bear-baiting.

2. **the course**: the baiting, the fight, from beginning to end.

3, 4. This is the other part of the prediction to which he now clings with the despair of a last hope.

6. **hotter . . . hell**: a name hotter than the name of the devil himself; a name that can make me burn with a fiercer hate. This was the general feeling among the "unrough English



youths" against Macbeth, and whom young Siward represents, **any is:** any that is.

11-13. Young Siward's death revives hopes of life, and perhaps of victory, in Macbeth; the next moment enters Macduff, who is destined to destroy both in a few minutes more.

18. **staves:** quarter-staffs, clubs, *lathis*; the common kerns or light infantry of those days were wretchedly armed for offence, and were destitute of all defensive armour. Macduff's noble nature will not allow him to raise his sword, completely cased in armour too as he was, against these wretches; for it would not be fighting them, but merely slaughtering them. **either thou:** it must be either thou, whom alone I will strike; there is fierce, concentrated resolve in this shortened language.

20. **undeeded:** unused against any other man.

20, 21. Wherever the *hor hangama* on the battle field is the loudest, there is Macbeth sure to be found, slaughtering half-armed wretches, defenseless against his claymore and his coat of mail; and this action of his is not the courage, is not even the valiant fury of a man, but it is the fury of a wild beast, killing for the pleasure of killing. Some critics take this action as a proof of valour, a proof of his "brave fighting" in his last moments; there is no more valour in this than there is valour in a wolf killing sheep.

22. **Let . . . fortune:** may chance bring me to him: it is chance that does so; but that chance is directed by Providence to whom Macduff had prayed to bring him face to face with the murderer.

24. **gently render'd:** surrendered without resistance by the willing garrison, who, now that Macbeth is out of the castle, open the gates to the enemy. Thus, after all, Malcolm's "thoughts speculative" that his two more experienced counsellors had rebuked, turn out to be correct!

25. **both sides:** some fighting for him, but others fighting against him.

27. The order of words meant is, no doubt, "The day professes itself (to be) almost yours": i.e. the victory is almost



ours. **yours:** Malcolm is again treated as the central figure, that of the king.

28. **And . . . do:** and with a little more fighting, will be completely yours. The use of "little" here without an "a," and the position of "itself" in l. 27 suggest another meaning:—"the day professes to be yours almost of its own accord ("almost itself") i.e. without calling forth any resistance, and there is little or nothing to be done in the way of fighting"; but the context shows this cannot be the correct meaning.

29. **strike . . . us:** (1) fight on our side, side by side with us. (2) strike so as to miss us, strike in the air; only pretended to fight for Macbeth. **Enter . . . castle:** they make way for him, as they ask him to be the first to enter the surrendered castle, as its king. **Sir:** sir king; kings are so addressed by subjects.

30. This abortive attempt at suicide or the thought of it merely, is not mentioned in the chronicles; in one of which Macbeth is killed by Macduff two years after this battle of Dunsinane, which is in Perthshire, and after a long and lonely pursuit, till overtaken at Lumphanan, in Aberdeenshire. Here in the play, Macbeth acts like a coward when it comes to raising his hand against himself; while his wife is braver; and this cowardice, by a grim irony, respites his life only for a few minutes; and these minutes he spends—spends how?—spends in want only taking the lives of others, right and left cutting them down as easily as if they were *banana* trees:—*a murderer to the very last*. **Roman fool:** say, like Cato the Younger, within the fortress of Utica, or Brutus on the battle field of Philippi; these patriots and Stoics, in Macbeth's eyes, were fools, and he a wise man in making a better use of his time, when near life's end! **lives . . . them:** this sounds like a diabolical joke:—"why should I be such a fool as to attempt or to think of suicide, when there are so many lives about me that I can take instead of my own single one? For it is a pretty sight to see the wounds I inflict on others, and a pleasure to see them die under my hand." Is this a



sentiment that a human being could utter, or a sentiment that a wild beast alone could feel, if wild beasts are capable of sentiments? He has already acted up to it, ll. 20, 21; and after that passing thought about suicide, here formulates his theory of the Pleasure of Killing, for its own sake; his is the theory of Murder for Murder's sake, as we have our theory of Art for Art's sake. No doubt, thus refreshed by his formula, he was about to go in for a second bout, when, unluckily, he comes plump upon Macduff, whom he has all this time been avoiding, while falling upon wretched, half-armed kerns, with the mysterious instinct of the cowardly tiger that makes it avoid the sportsman and fall upon cows, village women, belated wayfarers.

32. **hell-hound:** the devil's agent; the devil is the master of the hunt, Macbeth is one of his pack of hounds, the hunt is the murder of innocent human beings. **turn:** as soon as Macbeth saw Macduff, he was slinking away when he is thus called to stop and face round.

33-35. I will not fight with you; I have had enough of you, when I shed the blood of your family; I have no wish to shed more, by shedding your own blood. His guilty conscience makes a coward of him: the warning of the witches to beware of Macduff makes a coward of him; and cowardice thus redoubled, finds that excuse to offer.

34. **my soul:** this is the second time at least that Macbeth talks of his soul; he talked first of it after Duncan's murder; and we need not deny him the *human* feeling of remorse, speaking aloud from a human breast, as in both places. Let us think that a spark of human feeling shows itself here in Macbeth; but that spark only mars that pleasure that he had just been promising himself as a wild beast. Unhappy man! Happiness, not only as a Man, but even as a Beast, or as a Devil, is alike denied him in the end! For Remorse, that neither beast nor devil feels, mars it all.

37. **give thee out:** proclaim thee to be.

38. **intrenchant:** invulnerable; that cannot be cut in two.



39. **impress**: mark with a wound.

41. **charmed life**: life made invulnerable by magic charms. The charms he means are the predictions of the witches; in Christian chivalry and by the "laws of honour" alike, the use of such charms was forbidden; and Macbeth openly boasts of having violated them.

43. **angel**: evil genius, bad angel, the agent of the devil.

44. A mere play upon a word, that, otherwise, could not be seriously taken, falsifies the last of the predictions on which Macbeth had relied, which now, one after another, have all broken down. How great for mischief has the power of Hell been for a time; how easy, almost ridiculously easy, have been the means employed by mere human agents to foil it and make it contemptible, in the end!

48, 49. The belief that was rudely shaken in V<sub>2</sub> v. 44, is completely shattered here. **palter**: trifle, shuffle.

52. Macduff is chivalrous, is a man of honour, who will not slay an enemy except in fair fight; this is not the man who would think, who would dream, of killing *children*, even in revenge, as a most grossly mistaken interpretation of IV, iii, 216. makes him speak of doing. **coward**: by all that he has been lately doing, and for long has been doing, and by his present refusal, Macbeth shows that he richly deserves this epithet.

54. **rarer monsters**: such as are shown at raree-shows.

55. **pole**: picture hung on a pole at the entrance to a show.

56. **Here**: within, inside the booth, where the show is held.

59, 60. **Though**: with this word Macbeth adjures his faith in the powers of Evil, upon which he had till now relied and had shown that reliance by the other word. "Till", in V, iii, 60 and elsewhere; and which had at last brought him to this pass, in which he now finds himself; all this while it was the hopeful delusion, "till the wood come"; now it is the

defiant disillusion, "*though the wood has come*". and . . . **opposed**: and though thou be now opposed to me.

62. **Lay on**: shower your blows upon my shield.

63. **cries . . . enough**: surrenders. Macbeth has clung to life till now; and now he resolves to fling it away; what is the cause of this change of mind in him? Garrick's melodramatic ending of the play here omits this passage and makes his hero die with the words of Garrick's own insertion " My soul is lost for ever ", on his lips. Has Macbeth anywhere shown that he cares about his soul's welfare? He once called it his " precious jewel ", but by that he meant his valuable capital in hand with which to drive a hard bargain with the devil; but this is not what *we* mean by " soul ". **No** : it was no higher feeling than *vanity* that made him prefer death to life; it was the shame of being shown as a monster and a tyrant (with which he is threatened, and both of which he was, and knew he was) at a pennybooth.

64. **friends we miss**: the muster-roll has been called after the battle; Malcolm hopes that stragglers, who did not answer to their names when called out, will come in later.

65. Siward takes stock, and from the small total of those who are missing, judges that the victory has been cheaply bought; but that some among the missing must be dead (" go off "). He is correct on the whole, but incorrect in his own particular case; for, for him the victory has been dearly bought; as it immediately appears.

69. **only . . . but**: repetition for sake of emphasis. **was a man** : won his spurs, had "his baptism of fire", as later times would put it. Ross is ever the gentle conveyer when bad news has to be conveyed, in the soothing language of sympathy and consolation. Young Siward is the most conspicuous in rank among the 'unrough youths' of England who had volunteered in the cause of the unrough youth, Malcolm, and some of whom, no doubt, fell as young Siward had fallen.

75. Siward's first enquiry is *how* his son died; and, when satisfied that he died as a soldier should, he like a Spartan father, rejoices in his son's death (1.78) and like a Christian



Stoic, blesses him. **God's soldier:** a soldier in the army of God above; this looks like a heathen Scandinavian idea clothed in the language of a Christian: the Valhalla of Odin consisted of heroes who had died on earth as Siward's son had died.

78. **to:** to go to meet.

79. **knell . . . knoll'd:** no more thoughts of grief, no more words of grief, for him. **worth . . . sorrow:** he deserves more, and I shall see that he gets it. Malcolm feels much for Siward's loss, for the same hand that had robbed the one of a son, had robbed the other of a father: and he speaks like a king: he means to honour the memory of young Siward and of others among the dead, with fitting memorials, as he rewards the services of the living with titles of honour, below.

81. **Score:** a soldier's debt, namely, his life for his country, or his life for a good cause. **score:** account kept by cutting notches on a stick; our life on earth is like a reckoning run up at an inn.

S. D. Enter Macduff with Macbeth's head: the Great Revenge has been taken; taken by the hand of the *one* man whose Wrongs had been deepest. Had every wronged man taken his revenge singly, Macbeth would have deserved to die and come to life and die again, a thousand times—twenty times alone for Banquo's "twenty mortal murders."—Had Macbeth been a Serbian, then by Serbian law he would have had a thousand sentences of death passed on him for his thousand murders, and many thousands of years of cumulative sentences of penal servitude for his many thousand crimes lesser than murder. (See *The Times*, 21st May, 1928). In his *one* death, Macbeth got the mercy he never showed to others, and a mercy he never deserved.

82. **newer comfort:** a friend returned alive.

83. **stands:** "stuck on the end of a pole", as the chronicle says.

84. **the time:** all now living in Scotland.

85. **pearl:** (collective) the nobility of Scotland.



88. Macduff, as the senior thane (in age or rank) present, makes the announcement.

89-91. It will not be long before I reckon up what I owe to each of you separately, and square account with each; at present, I make a grateful return to all of you as a body, and create all here present who are Thanes, to be Earls henceforth. In history, this item in the Anglicizing of Scottish institutions took place about half a century later; but in the play, it takes place now, as a grateful tribute to the help given by England. **spend . . . expense:** a cognate accusative; the second word has been needlessly altered. **several loves:** that loving service that each of you has rendered to me. **even:** quits, discharged of the debt I owe to each of you.

91, 92. **thanes:** held by personal service; **earls:** held by land tenure; the former were lords over their lands, the latter were not; here however the change of title implies only a "promotion in the peerage", as we would now call it.

94. **would:** should.

95. **as:** such as. **exil'd friends:** friends exiled. Among these, would be his brother Donalbain, now a refugee in Ireland.

96. **watchful:** lest they should escape from Macbeth's tyranny by taking refuge abroad.

97. **Producing forth:** dragging out of their present concealment for deserved punishment; it is to be fervently hoped that the ruffians employed by Macbeth, whom we have seen in the Banquo and the Macduff murders, would be among these, as also the spies that he kept, of whom we have heard.

98. **fiend-like queen:** if our own opinion, after we have followed Lady Macbeth throughout the play, refuses to call her by this name, we must remember that Malcolm who calls her so, is Duncan's son; and that this son has but lately heard (from the Doctor?) of her complicity in his father's fate; with the wound of this information still fresh and raw, he cannot be a safe judge for doing justice to her character, bad as it was.

99. We have been spared this knowledge till this last moment of the play, as "the public" in Scotland, in the 11th



century were spread the knowledge of her complicity till a few hours before her death.

102. **in measure:** in due measure.

103. **one:** the old pronunciation here, to rhyme with "*Scone*", is still heard in *alone*, *atone*.

104. Holinshed gives "25th April, 1057, the sixteenth year of King Edward's reign" as the date of this coronation.

64-104. These lines are needed to complete the Action of the play; ending it 1.63 would end with a clap-trap, theatrical display, but would leave the Action incomplete.

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